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LORD BYRON.

From a Sketch made by Count D'Orsay in 1823.

LONDON: RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, 1893.

A JOURNAL

OF THE

CONVERSATIONS OF LORD BYRON

WITH THE

COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

A NEW EDITION, REVISED, AND ANNOTATED

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A CONTEMPORARY SKETCH OF LADY BLESSINGTON,
BY HER SISTER, AND A MEMOIR OF HER
BY THE EDITOR OF THIS EDITION

WITH SEVERAL PORTRAITS ENGRAVED ON STEEL

LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
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1893

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NOTE

The sketch commencing on the opposite page was not prefixed to the edition which has already appeared of this book (viz., in 1834). The one which follows is prepared especially for this issue.

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A

CONTEMPORARY SKETCH

OF

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

MARGUERITE BLESSINGTON was the third child and second daughter of Edmund Power, Esq., of Knockbrit, near Clonmel, in the County of Tipperary, and was born on the 1st of September, 1789. Her father, who was then a country gentleman, occupied with field sports and agricultural pursuits, was the only son of Michael Power, Esq., of Curragheen, and descended from an ancient family in the County of Waterford. Her mother also belonged to a very old Roman Catholic family, a fact of which she was not a little proud, and her genealogical tree was preserved with a religious veneration and studied until all its branches were as familiar as the names of her children. "My ancestors, the Desmonds," were her household gods, and their deeds and prowess her favourite theme.

The rest of the family consisted of a son, Michael; Anne and Edmund, who both died early; Ellen, who married, first, Mr. Home Purves, brother of Sir Alexander

Home Purves, a Scotch baronet of ancient descent and large fortune, and secondly, the Viscount Canterbury, then Speaker of the House of Commons; Robert, afterwards Surveyor-General of Van Diemen's Land; and Marianne, married to the Baron de St. Marsault.

Beauty, the heritage of the family, was, in her early youth, denied to Marguerite; her elder brother and sister, Michael and Anne, as well as Ellen and Robert, were singularly handsome and healthy children, while she, pale, weakly, and ailing, was for years regarded as little likely ever to grow to womanhood; the precocity of her intellect, the keenness of her perceptions, and her extreme sensitiveness, all of which are so often regarded, more especially among the Irish, a people peculiarly impressionable and superstitious, as the precursive symptoms of an early death, confirmed this belief, and the poor, pale, reflective child was long looked upon as doomed to a premature grave.

The atmosphere in which she lived was but little congenial to such a nature. Her father, a man of violent temper, and little given to study the characters of his children, intimidated and shook the delicate nerves of the sickly child, though there were moments—rare ones, it is true—when the sparkles of her early genius for an instant dazzled and gratified him. Her mother, though she failed not to bestow the tenderest maternal care on the health of the little sufferer, was not capable of appreciating her fine and subtle qualities, and her brothers and sisters, fond as they were of her, were not, in their high health and boisterous gaiety, companions suited to such a child.

During her earliest years, therefore, she lived in a world of dreams and fancies, sufficient, at first, to satisfy her

infant mind, but soon all too vague and incomplete to fill the blank within. Perpetual speculations, restless inquiries, to which she could find no satisfactory solutions, continually occupied her dawning intellect; and, until at last accident happily threw in her way someone capable of comprehending the workings of the infant spirit, it was at once a torment and a blessing to her.

This person, a Miss Anne Dwyer, a visitor and friend of her mother's, was herself possessed of talents and information far above the standard of women in those days and in those situations, where a considerable portion of natural and uncultivated cleverness, an inexhaustible fund of vivacity and repartee, with a very small sprinkling of education and accomplishments, "two washing gowns and a tune on the piano," generally formed the whole dower of an Irish country girl, even when belonging to some of the oldest and most respectable families.

Miss Dwyer was surprised and soon interested by the reflective air and strange questions, which had excited only ridicule among those who had hitherto been around the child. The development of this fine organization, and the aiding it to comprehend what had so long been a sealed book, formed a study fraught with pleasure to her; and, while Marguerite was yet an infant, this worthy woman began to undertake the task of her education. She commenced by encouraging her freely to communicate all her ideas, thoughts, and speculations, and by answering her questions as clearly and satisfactorily as she was able. The child, enchanted at being at length understood and instructed, eagerly demanded where her preceptress had found what appeared to her an inexhaustible fund of knowledge. "From books," was the reply; and from that moment books seemed to her the

most precious of all treasures. She learned to read with a rapidity and facility that astonished as much as they delighted her instructress: and, once possessed of this source of entertainment, she became independent of all other amusement.

Even at this early age, the powers of her imagination had already begun to develop themselves. She would entertain her brothers and sisters for hours with tales invented as she proceeded, and at last so remarkable did this talent become, that her parents, astonished at the interest and coherence of her narrations, constantly called upon her to *improvise* for the entertainment of their friends and neighbours, a task always easy to her fertile brain; and in a short time the neglected child became the wonder of the neighbourhood. Her health at length began to improve; and, though still cited as the plainest of the family, there were to be found a few who ventured to predict that she would one day do it no discredit.

The increasing ages of their children, and the difficulty of obtaining the means of instruction for them at Knockbrit, induced Mr. and Mrs. Power to put into practice a design long formed of removing to Clonmel, the county town of Tipperary. This change, which was looked upon by her brothers and sisters as a source of infinite satisfaction, was to Marguerite one of almost unmingled regret. To leave the place of her birth, the scenes which her passionate love of Nature had so deeply endeared to her, was one of the severest trials she had ever experienced, and was looked forward to with sorrow and dread. At last, the day arrived when she was to leave the home of her childhood, and sad and lonely she stole forth to the garden to bid farewell to each beloved spot.

Gathering a handful of flowers, as relics to keep in

memory of the place, she, fearing the ridicule of the other members of the family, carefully concealed them in her pocket; and, with many tears and bitter regrets, was at last driven from Knockbrit, where, as it seemed to her, she left all of happiness behind her.

Arrived at their destination, the many friends with whom her parents were acquainted at Clonmel eagerly flocked around them. Loud and long were the praises bestowed on the beauty and animation of the children, with the exception of Marguerite, who, pale, sad, and retiring, showed to even less advantage than usual; and she would have remained wholly unnoticed, had not the projection of that homely article of dress, her pocket, unfortunately attracted the attention of the lady at whose house the first evening was passed. "What have you got in your pocket, my dear?" she inquired of the child, who, blushing with painful confusion, dared not reply to the question. Her mother beckoned to her, and, thrusting her hand into the repository of treasures, drew forth from its recesses the withered flowers, so carefully placed there in the morning. Shame, embarrassment, and grief, all struggled in the breast of the child as the beloved relics were brought to light, and contemptuously flung from the window; and, after a hard but unsuccessful effort to restrain her tears, she burst into a fit of weeping, which drew down accusations of folly and ill-temper, at the idea that a girl of her age should amuse herself by filling her pocket with withered flowers, and then cry because they were taken from her!

At Clonmel, the improving health of Marguerite, and the society of children of her own age, gradually produced their effect on her spirits; and, though her love of reading and study continued rather to increase than

abate, she became more able to join in the amusements of her brothers and sisters, who, delighted at the change, gladly welcomed her into their society, and manifested the affection which hitherto they had little opportunity of displaying.

But soon it seemed as if the violent grief she had experienced at quitting the place of her birth was prophetic of the misfortunes which, one by one, followed the removal to Clonmel.

Her father, with the recklessness too often displayed by his countrymen, commenced a system of give-and-take hospitality, which his means, though amply sufficient to supply necessary expenses, were wholly inadequate to support.

He then embarked in a speculation in which were engaged the heads of some of the most respectable families of Clonmel and its neighbourhood; and so successful was it at first, that he would, in all probability, have been enabled to secure a comfortable independence for himself and his children, when, in an evil hour, he was tempted by the representations of a certain nobleman, more anxious to promote his own interest and influence than scrupulous as to the consequences which might result to others, to accept the situation of magistrate for the counties of Tipperary and Waterford, a position from which no pecuniary reward was to be obtained, and which, in those times of trouble and terror, was fraught with difficulty and danger.

Led on by promises of a lucrative situation and hints at the probability of a baronetcy, as well as by his own fearless and reckless disposition, Mr. Power performed the painful and onerous duties of his situation with a zeal which procured for him the animosity of the friends and

relatives in the remotest degree of those whom it was his fate in the course of his office to bring to punishment, and entirely precluded his giving the slightest attention to the scheme which had bid so fair to re-establish the fortunes of his family. His nights were spent in hunting down, with troops of dragoons, the unfortunate and misguided rebels, whose connections, in turn, burned his store-houses, destroyed his plantations, and killed his cattle, while for all of these losses he was repaid by the most flattering encomiums from his noble friend, letters of thanks from the Secretary for Ireland, acknowledging his services, and by the most gratifying and marked attention at the Castle, when he visited Dublin.

He was too proud to remind the nobleman he believed to be his friend of his often-repeated promises, whilst the latter, only too glad not to be pressed for their performance, continued to lead on his victim, and, instead of the valuable official appointment, etc., etc., proposed to him to set up a newspaper, in which his lordship was to procure for him the publication of the Government proclamations, a source of no inconsiderable profit. This journal was, of course, to advocate nothing but his lordship's views, so that, by way of serving his friend, he found a cheap and easy method of furthering his own plans. The result may be guessed: Mr. Power, utterly unsuited in every respect to the conduct of such an undertaking, only became more and more deeply involved, and year by year added to his difficulties.

About this time, Anne, the eldest of the family, was attacked by a nervous fever, partly the result of the terror and anxiety into which the whole of the family was plunged by the misfortunes which gathered round them, aggravated by the frequent and terrible outbreaks of rage

to which their father, always passionate, now became more than ever subject. In spite of every effort, this lovely child, whose affectionate disposition and endearing qualities entirely precluded any feeling of jealousy which the constant praises of her extreme beauty, to the disparagement of Marguerite, might have excited in the breast of the latter, fell a victim to the disease, and not long after Edmund, the second son, also died.

These successive misfortunes so impaired the health and depressed the spirits of the mother, that the gloom continued to fall deeper and deeper over the house.

Thus matters continued for some years, though still there were moments when the natural buoyancy of childhood caused the younger members of the family to find relief from the cloud of sorrow and anxiety that hung over their home. The love of society still entertained by their father brought not unfrequent guests to his board, and enabled his children to mix with the families around. Among those who visited at his house were some whose names have been honourably known to their country. Lord Hutchinson and his brothers, Curran, the brilliant and witty Lysaght, Generals Sir Robert Mac Farlane, and Sir Colquhoun Grant—then lieutenant-colonels—and other men of talent and merit, were among these visitors, and their society and conversation were the greatest delight of Marguerite, who, child as she was, was perfectly capable of understanding and appreciating their superiority.

At fourteen she began to enter into the society of grown-up persons, an event which afforded her no small satisfaction, as that of children, with the exception of her brothers and sisters, especially Ellen, from whom she was almost inseparable, had but little charm for her. Ellen,

who was somewhat more than a year her junior, shared the beauty of her family, a fact of which Marguerite, instead of being jealous, was proud, and the greatest affection subsisted between the sisters, though there was but little similarity in their dispositions or pursuits. In order that they might not be separated, Ellen, notwithstanding her extreme youth, was permitted to accompany her sister into the society of Tipperary—that is to say, to assemblies held once a week, called *Coteries*. These, though music and dancing were the principal amusements, were not considered as balls, to which only girls of riper years were admitted. Here, though Ellen's beauty at first procured her much more notice and admiration than fell to the lot of her sister, the latter ere long began to attract no inconsiderable degree of attention. Her dancing was singularly graceful, and the intelligence of her countenance and the charm of her conversation produced more lasting impressions than mere physical beauty could have won. Her consciousness of the want of this attraction also induced her to bestow particular pains on her dress, a taste for which had, we may state *en passant*, very early developed itself, and been the cause of many amusing adventures, which our space, unfortunately, does not permit us to relate.

About this period, the 47th Regiment arrived, and was stationed at Clonmel, and, according to the custom of country towns, particularly in Ireland, all the houses of the leading gentry were thrown open to receive the officers with due attention.

At a dinner given to them by her father, Marguerite was immediately singled out by two of them, Captain Murray and Captain Farmer, who paid her the most

marked attention, which was renewed at a juvenile ball given shortly after.

The admiration of Captain Murray, although it failed to win so very youthful a heart, pleased and flattered her, while that of Captain Farmer excited nothing but mingled fear and distaste. She hardly knew why; for, young, good-looking, and with much to win the good graces of her sex, he was generally considered as more than equal to Captain Murray in the power of pleasing.

An instinct, however, which she could neither define nor control, increased her dislike to such a degree at every succeeding interview, that Captain Farmer, perceiving it was in vain to address her personally, applied to her parents, unknown to her, offering his hand, with the most liberal proposals which a good fortune enabled him to make. In ignorance of an event which was destined to work so important a change in her destiny, Marguerite received a similar proposal from Captain Murray, who at the same time informed her of the course adopted by his brother officer, and revealed a fact which perhaps accounted for the instinctive dread she felt for him. Captain Farmer was subject to fits of insanity, so violent as to endanger the safety of himself and those around him; and even during his lucid intervals there were moments when the symptoms of the terrible malady might be detected in a certain wildness and abruptness of speech and gesture. Astonishment, embarrassment, and incredulity were the feelings uppermost in the girl's mind at a communication in every way so strange and unexpected. That a child of fourteen should thus seriously be sought in marriage by two men seemed to her as all but impossible, and that she should be kept in ignorance of the fact as regarded one appeared no less so. The

idea, however, that this silence on the part of her parents might proceed from their having rejected the addresses of her dreaded suitor occurred to relieve her mind, and, feeling more pained and embarrassed than gratified by the declaration of Captain Murray, she blushingly declined his proposals, on the plea that she was too young to contemplate so serious an engagement.

A few days proved to her that the information of Captain Farmer's having addressed himself to her parents was but too true; and the further discovery that these addresses were sanctioned by them filled her with anxiety and dismay. She knew the embarrassed circumstances of her father, the desire he would naturally feel to secure a union so advantageous in a worldly point of view for one of his children, and she knew, too, his fiery temper, his violent resistance of any attempt at opposition, and the little respect, or consideration, he entertained for the wishes of any of his family when contrary to his own. Her mother, too, gave but little heed to what she considered as the foolish and romantic notions of a child who was much too young to be consulted in the matter. Despite of tears, prayers, and entreaties, the unfortunate girl was compelled to yield to the commands of her inexorable parents; and at fourteen and a half she was united to a man who inspired her with nothing but feelings of terror and detestation.

The result of such a union may be guessed. Her husband could not but be conscious of the sentiment she entertained towards him, though she endeavoured to conceal the extent of her aversion; and this conviction, acting upon his already diseased brain, produced such frequent and terrible paroxysms of rage and jealousy that his victim trembled in his presence. It were needless to

relate the details of the period of misery, distress, and harrowing fear, through which Marguerite, a child in years, though old in suffering, passed. Denied in her entreaties to be permitted to return to the home of her parents, she at last, in positive terror for her personal safety, fled from the roof of her brutal persecutor to return no more.

Of the years which followed this decisive step, we can give but little account. Mrs. Farmer resided principally in England in the most complete seclusion, indulging to the utmost her natural love of study, to which she devoted the greater portion of her time. Circumstances having at last induced her to fix upon London as a residence, she established herself in a house in Manchester Square, where, with her brother Robert (Michael had died in India some years previously), she remained for a considerable period, enjoying in his society and her favourite pursuits a degree of tranquillity which, after the stormy scenes of her early years, was positive happiness.

Notwithstanding the troublous scenes through which she had passed, the beauty denied her in childhood had gradually budded and blossomed into a degree of loveliness which was the admiration of all, and which Lawrence painted and Byron sang.

Unknown, unfriended, and retiring from the gaze of the world, her extraordinary beauty attracted, wherever she appeared, a degree of attention and admiration which she was far from seeking. By dint of anxious inquiries, her history became partly revealed, and the interest her misfortunes excited added to the charm that she already possessed. Hosts of would-be admirers sought to win her favour, but her dignity and reserve forbade any but the most respectful attentions, and drove away the idle flatterers, whose ill-advised gallantries met with the coldest rebuffs.

She received at her house those only whose age and character rendered them safe friends, and a very few others on whose perfect respect and consideration she could wholly rely.

Among the latter was the Earl of Blessington, then a widower, who entertained feelings of the deepest and most respectful admiration for his beautiful hostess; but, fearful of forfeiting the privilege so highly prized of enjoying the charm of her society and conversation, he ventured not to give expression to any feeling that might endanger the loss of this pleasure, until the occurrence of an event which placed the destiny of Mrs. Farmer in her own hands.

This was the death of her husband, who, at a dinner given by one of his friends, locked the door, and, being seized with one of the fits of insanity to which he had for so many years been subject, attempted to rush out, and, failing in his frenzy to open the lock, sprang to the window, which stood open, and, before he could be prevented, flung himself out, and was killed almost on the spot. This event, which occurred in the year 1817, left Lord Blessington at liberty to solicit the hand of Mrs. Farmer, which she accorded to him, and the marriage took place in London in the month of February, 1818.

Generous to lavishness, charitable, compassionate, delicately considerate of the feelings of others, sincere, forgiving, devoted to those she loved, and with a warmth of heart rarely equalled, her change of fortune was immediately felt by every member of her family. The parents whose cruel obstinacy had involved her in so much misery, but whose ruined circumstances now placed them in need of her aid, were comfortably supported by

her up to the period of their deaths. Her brothers and sisters (the youngest of whom, Marianne, she adopted and educated), and even the more distant of her relatives, all profited by her benefits, assistance, and interest.

The death of Lord Blessington, from apoplexy, which occurred in Paris in the year 1829, again effected a change in her destiny, and was a source of the deepest and most enduring affliction. She remained in Paris till after the Revolution of 1830, when she returned to England, and took a house in Seamore Place, Mayfair, from which some years subsequently she removed to Gore House, Kensington. Here, in the midst of splendour and elegance, adding largely to her jointure by the success of her literary efforts, she lived for some years a life peculiarly suited to her taste—surrounded by men of distinction in every branch, loved and admired by all who came within her sphere. Gore House was an arena where assembled the celebrities of all nations, all politics, all denominations, and all positions: it was the starting-point from whence Prince Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, a cherished guest through years of friendless exile, proceeded to head the Government of France.

But in the course of time, changes and circumstances, over which Lady Blessington had no control, rendered a removal from Gore House desirable. Severe domestic afflictions, increasing years, and impaired health, made the literary labour, in which she had been so long and actively engaged, a task much too difficult and fatiguing to be longer persevered in, at the same time that its remuneration, in the cases of even the most popular and distinguished writers, became considerably diminished. The distresses in Ireland, from whence Lady Blessington's income was drawn, were also the source of considerable

delays, disappointments, and losses. Desirous of rest, and feeling the impossibility of making a change in her mode of life without a change of residence, she had long contemplated retiring to the Continent, where her income would be sufficient to enable her to live without the necessity of labour. This step was at last put into execution, and, in the month of April, 1849, she removed to Paris, where she took a new and beautiful *appartement* in the Champs Elysées, which she began to occupy herself in furnishing. Having nearly completed the task, her impatience to quit the hotel, where she suffered much from the heat and noise, and her desire to enter her new abode, induced her to remove to it before it was entirely ready for her reception, and she took possession of it on the 3rd of June. Early on the following morning she was attacked with difficulty of breathing, a symptom from which she had suffered on previous occasions, but which had been lightly treated by the physicians consulted. Finding herself becoming rapidly worse, she called for assistance, and medical aid was instantly sent for, while, in the meantime, every remedy that could be suggested was applied, but in vain. She gradually sank, and expired at the last tranquil as a sleeping infant; so that not even those who hung trembling over her could fix with precision the moment when she drew her latest breath. Enlargement of the heart, which was proved on examination to have commenced at least five-and-twenty years previously, was the cause of her death. Possibly the change of air and mode of life, the unusual exertion she had undergone during her stay in Paris, and the excitement attendant on the removal, may have accelerated the crisis, but that such a malady must soon have had a fatal result was inevitable.

The remains of Lady Blessington are interred in France, a country for which she always entertained much regard, and which, on her removal thither, she contemplated the probability of making her permanent residence. They are deposited at Chambourcy, near St. Germain-en-Laye, the residence of the Duc and Duchesse de Grammont, between whom and Lady Blessington the warmest and closest intimacy had existed uninterrupted from the period of her first residence in Paris. The monument is erected in a most beautiful and retired spot, designed by one who for nearly five-and-twenty years had regarded her with a deep and filial devotion, and whose only consolation was to be found in paying the last tribute of tenderness and respect to her cherished memory. We allude to Comte D'Orsay, whose dying mother had with her latest breath exacted from Lady Blessington a promise never to leave her son, a similar promise having been made to her by Lord Blessington, who loved him with a paternal affection. This mutual engagement was kept to the letter, and the quarter of a century that they remained together only served to strengthen and consolidate the tender regard that subsisted between them. In Comte D'Orsay, Lady Blessington found the son that nature had withheld from her, and on him she bestowed that tenderness with which her heart overflowed. His wishes, his interests, were ever the moving principle of her actions; his friends were hers, and to love or dislike him (and her quick and feminine instinct never failed to teach her where either sentiment existed) was the best claim to her affection, or the strongest provocative to her antipathy.

M. A. P.

MEMOIR OF
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

The Countess of Blessington wrote several works of fiction, but none of her books had more romance in it than her life.

She was born on September 1, 1789, at Knockbrit, near Clonmel, her father being Edmund Power, a small landowner. She had three sisters, all of whom were handsome from their youth, while she was the reverse of attractive in her earlier years. Though Marguerite, for so she was named, was not blessed with beauty as a young girl, she had cleverness in excess of her brothers and sisters, and was famed for her powers as a story-teller. Her childhood was unhappy, owing in great part to the unkindness of her father, who was a tyrant abroad and a bully at home.

Marguerite acquired beauty with years. Before she was fifteen her good looks attracted suitors, one of whom found favour in her father's eyes. A match

does not follow that anything had occurred which ought to have been concealed; all that can be truthfully said is that nothing is known. In 1809 she was in Dublin; next she sojourned in Hampshire; and in 1816 she was living in London, with her brother Robert, at a house in Manchester Square. On February 16, 1818, four months after her husband's death, Mrs. Farmer became the second wife of the Earl of Blessington. The pair cannot be said to have been ill-matched in years, as the wife was twenty-eight and the husband thirty-five.

Lord Blessington's income was £30,000. His tastes were expensive, and his second wife, who had not been extravagant before marrying him, revelled in luxury after her marriage. The house in St. James's Square in which the Blessingtons lived was furnished with that utter disregard of expense which ends in ruin. It was the meeting-place of a brilliant society, and Lady Blessington sat as a queen in a circle of admirers. She was clever as well as lovely, witty as well as high-placed, yet, while enjoying all the pleasures which money can supply, she sighed for the fame which money alone will not purchase.

Her ambition to become a leader in the world of letters as well as in that of fashion led to the publication of two works from her pen in 1822, the one being entitled "The Magic Lantern," the other

"Sketches and Fragments," both of them containing accounts of the life led in the society wherein she moved, and reflections upon it. Neither work was successful. Longmans were the publishers of both, and they could not hand over to the authoress more than a few pounds, which represented her share of the small profit on the second work, the first having yielded nothing. At that time, however, the Countess of Blessington was sublimely indifferent to money, being provided with enough for her needs by a husband who joyfully lavished his large fortune upon her. The sum which the publishers handed to her was bestowed in charity.

During three years the house of the Blessingtons was one in which all who were remarkable in the world of fashion and intellect congregated and shone. It was as noted as Holland House as a centre of attraction, and Lady Blessington numbered women of rank and virtue among her guests as well as men of mark in society, while Lady Holland's invitations were accepted by men only. At a later period in Lady Blessington's career, her position in society came to resemble that of Lady Holland.

Early in 1822, a Frenchman named Count D'Orsay accompanied his sister and her husband, the Duc de Guiche, when they journeyed to England, and visited the Blessingtons. The Count was young, handsome, and highly accomplished. He ingratiated himself with men as easily as with women, and he soon

became on intimate terms with the Earl of Blessington and his wife.

On August 22, 1822, the Earl and Countess started for the Continent with the view of seeing much of France and Italy in a leisurely way, and of stopping at Genoa and seeing Byron, with whom the Earl was personally acquainted. The Countess of Blessington kept a journal of her experiences, which was published in 1839, and was entitled "The Idler in Italy." In that account there is a contrast which is most striking between the period of which she writes and that in which we live, not only as to the manner, but the purpose of travelling. The journey was made with strict attention to the comfort which money could procure, and it was also made in the leisurely way which has long gone out of fashion. Seven months were passed on the road from London to Genoa, and places of interest were visited with a thoroughness which is now rare. The narrative is sometimes minute to tediousness, and the opening pages are in very bad taste, five of them being devoted to comments upon the physical sufferings of the Countess's fellow-passengers when crossing the Channel from Dover to Calais.

Many interesting facts are scattered through the work, and some of the passages about Byron supplement those in the "Conversations." She mentions several persons whom she met while in France and Italy; but the name of Count D'Orsay is not among

the number, yet he renewed in Paris the acquaintance which he had begun in London; he afterwards rejoined the party at Valence and Avignon, and, as a result of his perseverance and attention, he was invited to join it.

The start from Paris was made in state. The Blessingtons had brought men and women servants from London, and they soon found, as the Countess records, "the greater number of domestics one is compelled to keep, the greater are the torments they inflict." In Paris they "murmured at the hardships to which they are exposed. . . . The ladies'-maids sigh for their tea and toast, and the men groan at the absence of their beef and porter." It must be added in fairness that Lady Blessington was a grumbler also, and it is possible that her husband was equally exacting and discontented. She pronounces the dinners at her hotel execrable, and she complains that cooking in Paris has greatly degenerated within her own memory. This was in 1822; a similar complaint is often made now. She likens a perfect French dinner to the conversation of a very clever and highly-educated man: "enough of the raciness of the inherent natural quality remains to gratify the taste, but is rendered more attractive by the manner in which it is presented." Moreover, she quotes a remark of an old nobleman, which is curious enough to deserve repetition: "He used to say he could judge of a

man's birth by the dishes he preferred ; but above all by the vegetables : truffles, morels, mushrooms, and peas in their infancy, he designated as aristocratic vegetables ; but all the vast stock of beans, full-grown peas, carrots, turnips, parsnips, cauliflowers, onions, etc., he said, were only fit for the vulgar."

Two carriages and a "fourgon," or baggage-waggon, carried the party and attendants. A courier superintended all arrangements, and a cook, who had prepared dishes for an Emperor, joined the party at Paris. Towards the end of her work the Countess gives vent to her feelings with regard to the "fourgon," which she styles "a real blessing to women," as it removes half the inconvenience of travel : "From its roomy storehouse are drawn forth those movable articles so indispensable to the 'comfort of the learned and curious, not only in fish sauces,' but in arranging houses. Thence come the patent brass bed, that gives repose at night, and the copious supply of books which ensures amusement during the day. Thence emerge the modern inventions of easy-chairs and sofas to occupy the smallest space when packed ; *batteries de cuisine*, to enable a cook to fulfil the arduous duties of his *métier ;* and though last, not least, cases to contain the delicate *chapeaux*, *toques*, *berets*, and *bonnets* of a Herbault, too fragile to bear the less easy motion

of leathern band-boxes crowning imperials. Yes, a 'fourgon' is one of the comforts of life."

I do not wonder that a French spectator of the preparations for the departure from the hotel of the Blessingtons' party of attendants should have exclaimed: "How strange those English are! One would suppose that, instead of a single family, a regiment at least was about to move. How many things those people require to satisfy them!"

Geneva was the first city of importance at which the party halted after leaving Paris; the principal towns of Switzerland were next visited. At Lausanne the Countess saw the house in which Gibbon lived, and the garden where he walked after writing the last page of his history, and soliloquized on the occasion in words which are the most pathetic of any from his pen. A hotel now stands on the site of his house; but the garden attached to it is different from that in which Gibbon delighted. Berne, Zurich, Lucerne were visited in succession, and then the party returned to Geneva, travelling thence to Lyons. The principal places visited after leaving Lyons were Grenoble, Valence, Orange, and Avignon, where a halt of several months was made.

It is noteworthy that the Countess of Blessington was not only an indefatigable sightseer, but a careful recorder of what she saw and ascertained, and her observations are seldom commonplace, while sometimes they are very acute. She did not transcribe

into her journal what she had read in a guide-book. Wherever she went she was introduced to the men who had studied the subjects in which she was interested: the information which local antiquaries and men of learning supplied was worth hearing and recording. She saw everything to the best advantage, and enjoyed to the full the opportunities which she had for acquiring knowledge. For this reason the journal which she diligently kept during her travels has not yet lost its interest or its charm.

Leaving Avignon on February 16, 1823, the party went to Aix, the capital of Provence. Many touches in Lady Blessington's journal betray her character and excite a smile. She was not born in the lap of luxury. She did not enjoy the sweets of existence in the house of her first husband; yet, after becoming the Countess of Blessington, she writes as if she had been accustomed all her days to sybaritic ease and aristocratic station. Any discomfort in travel she resents as an affront. A catalogue of her lamentations would not be edifying, and I abstain from preparing one; but an instance of her grievances may be cited by way of specimen. Having nothing else to complain of at Aix, she finds fault with the milk and the butter, the milk coming from goats and the butter from a distance. What seems to have tantalized her was that an English family settled there possessed the only cow

in the city, and that she could not procure "either cream or butter, or, at least, any that was palatable."

From Aix the party journeyed to Marseilles, thence to Toulon, making a stay of some length at both, and one of a few hours only at Cannes, which was then a small fishing village. The Countess enjoyed the beauty of the prospect between Nice and Antibes, and Antibes and Nice—a treat which is denied to the traveller by express train now. She writes that never had she beheld before "any scenery that could surpass that which presents itself to the eye on crossing the mountains that lead to Antibes"; and she afterwards adds: "The prospect from the height above Antibes is one of the finest I have ever seen. Hills covered with wood, whence a spire, village, or château, is seen to peep forth; the blue waters of the Mediterranean spread out in front; and the snow-crowned mountains of the Maritime Alps rearing their heads to the clouds, form a magnificent picture."

She was unfavourably impressed with Nice, then an Italian city, and at the height of its undeserved popularity as a place of resort for invalids from England. She found, as these poor invalids did to their sorrow, that the climate was far less genial in winter than that of many places on the southern shores of the British Isles. She witnessed sights which are happily rare now that it is generally understood that none but

those who are robust ought to select Nice as a place of residence in winter. "I am filled with pity," she writes, "when I meet some fair English girl, with the bright hectic tinge on her delicate cheek, and the lustrous eyes, which betoken the presence of that most perfidious and fatal of all diseases, consumption, mounted on a pony, led by a father, a brother, or one who hoped to stand in a still more tender relation to her. I tremble when I see the warm cloak in which she is enveloped swept by the rude wind from her shrinking shoulders, and hear that fearful cough which shakes her tortured chest. A few weeks, and such invalids (and, alas! they are many) are seen no more ; and the mourning parents retrace their route with the bitter knowledge that they left their home in vain—nay, that the change of climate which they fondly anticipated would have preserved their darling had accelerated her death."

The change which has occurred in the manner of travel along the Riviera cannot be better exemplified than by stating that the Blessingtons could not drive in their carriage from Nice to Genoa, and had to send it with their servants by sea, proceeding as far as Mentone in light vehicles of the country, and continuing their journey on muleback. While Lady Blessington was favoured with information from local antiquaries at every place where she sojourned, she was not able to learn on the way from Nice to Mentone what the traveller now can easily do by

turning to one of Murray's guide-books. An instance of the want of such a fund of facts was supplied when the little village of Turbia, on the Cornice road, was reached. Here was seen what she calls "one of the most picturesque ruins imaginable." She tried to learn something about it, but failed to get anything more than the unsatisfying answer from the Custom-house officer "that it was a very fine and ancient ruin, well worth the attention of travellers." Had Lady Blessington possessed such a guide-book as any traveller can now carry, she would have learned that the picturesque ruin was a trophy of Augustus, erected by the Roman Senate to commemorate the subjugation of forty-five Gaulish tribes.

Looking down from this part of the road, the houses of Monaco are visible 2,000 feet below. Lady Blessington states that "the village of Monaco" looked like a town built for children, and she adds that its pigmy white houses "have a beautiful appearance." A great poet saw the same sight several years afterwards, and his lines have rendered it memorable for ever. What Tennyson beheld and felt is told in "The Daisy":

> "What Roman strength Turbia showed
> In ruin, by the mountain-side;
> How like a gem, beneath, the city
> Of little Monaco, basking, glowed."

At Mentone she had to sleep on a mattress filled

with Indian corn straw, and she was surprised to find it as comfortable as the most luxurious couch. But her regard for appearances is shown by the comment: "How an English housemaid would wonder to see a fine lady content with such a bed!"

Despite Lady Blessington's professed inability to endure hardships when travelling, and notwithstanding that she makes the unsuspecting reader imagine that her whole life had been passed in splendid affluence, there is an unexpected absence from her narrative of complaint about the harshness of her lot when she had to journey on muleback from Mentone to Genoa. Indeed, the change in the mode of locomotion gave her such pleasure that she stated, "There cannot be a more agreeable mode of travelling than on mules."

On March 31, 1823, she entered Genoa with the party, which then numbered thirteen, and occupied rooms at the Albergo della Villa, which appeared to her a palace in comparison with the inns at which she had lodged on the way. The chief purpose of a long, leisurely and an uneventful journey was nearly attained. The party started with Genoa as a destination, and a meeting with Byron as an object. Lady Blessington had not lost any opportunity by the way for conversing about him, and she was able to note that "he is much in vogue in France, and a lively curiosity exists

respecting him. The French regard him as a most mysterious character, in which much of evil and good, the former, however, preponderating, is mingled." When Genoa had been reached at length, she thus gave expression to the thought which was uppermost in her mind: "Desirous as I am to see 'Genoa the Superb,' with its street of palaces, and the treasures of art they contain I confess that its being the residence of Lord Byron gives it a still greater attraction for me. His works have excited such a lively interest in my mind, and the stories related of him have so much increased it, that I look forward to making his acquaintance with impatience. Should he decline seeing us, as he has done to many of his acquaintances, it will be a great disappointment to me; but I will not anticipate such an annoyance. I long to compare him with the *beau-idéal* I have formed in my mind's eye, and to judge how far the descriptions given of him are correct."

On the following day, after she had taken a bath, as she is careful to state, and had declined to receive Lord William Russell because she had not dressed herself, she made the following entry in her journal: "And am I indeed in the same town with Byron? and to-morrow I may, perhaps, behold him! I never before felt the same impatient longing to see anyone known to me only by his works. I hope he may not be fat, as Moore described him

and likes also to pass them *en revue*, pronouncing *en passant* opinions in which wit and sly sarcasm are more obvious than good-nature."

The foregoing statement is explicit and most complimentary to all parties, yet doubts have been thrown upon its correctness by the Countess's biographer. As Mr. Madden had no object in writing what was unpleasant about the subject of his biography, it may be inferred that he would have refrained from any disparaging comment, unless his authority for making it was entirely trustworthy. His conclusion is that the Countess was annoyed during her first interview with Byron, and he insinuates that the great poet may have failed in paying due homage to the great beauty's intellect. A beautiful woman is always exacting as to her intellect, and a plain one as to her face, both enjoying the most the flattery which they least deserve. Whatever the case may be matters but little. Mr. Madden's statement concerning the visit to Byron, which he makes on the authority of one "who had good knowledge of all the circumstances of this visit," is to the effect that Lady Blessington is in error in representing the interview to have been sought by Byron, and that "a little ruse was practised on his lordship to obtain it. A rainy forenoon was selected for the drive to Byron's villa. Thus shelter was necessitated, and that necessity furnished a plea for a visit which would not have been made without

some awkwardness under other circumstances. Lord Blessington, having been admitted at once on presenting himself at Byron's door, was on the point of taking his departure, apologizing for the briefness of the visit on account of Lady Blessington being left in an open carriage in the courtyard, the rain then falling, when Byron immediately insisted on descending with Lord Blessington and conducting her ladyship into his house."

The foregoing statement is open to the criticism that one part of it is incorrect. This is the part to the effect that a rainy day was "selected" for the drive to Albaro. The Blessingtons reached Genoa on March 31, and paid the visit on the morning of the following day; hence they did not purposely choose a day on which rain fell. I fear that Mr. Madden was over-credulous in accepting the story of his anonymous informant. Byron did not express any distaste to the visit. He returned it the next day, and then he wrote as follows to Moore: "I have just seen some friends of yours, who paid me a visit yesterday, which, in honour of them and of you, I returned to-day; as I reserve my bear-skin and teeth, and paws and claws, for our enemies. . . . Your allies, whom I found very agreeable personages, are Milor Blessington and *épouse*, travelling with a very handsome companion, in the shape of a 'French Count' (to use Farquhar's phrase in the 'Beau's Stratagem'), who has all the air of a *Cupidon*

déchainé, and is one of the few specimens I have seen of our ideal of a Frenchman *before* the Revolution—an old friend with a new face, upon whose like I never thought that we should look again. Miladi seems highly literary, to which and your honour's acquaintance with the family I attribute the pleasure of having seen them. She is also very pretty, even in a morning, a species of beauty on which the sun of Italy does not shine so frequently as the chandelier."

The Countess of Blessington's version of this visit which she gives in "The Idler in Italy" is less detailed than that in the "Conversations," yet it deserves reading: "Lord Byron has just left our hotel; he came to us about two o'clock and remained until half-past four. It is strange to see the perfect *abandon* with which he converses to recent acquaintances, on subjects which even friends would think too delicate for discussion. I do not like this openness on affairs that should be only confided to long-tried intimacy: it betrays a want of the delicacy and decorum which a sensitive mind ought to possess, and leaves him at the mercy of every chance acquaintance to whom he may make his imprudent disclosures. Byron seems to take a pleasure in censuring England and its customs; yet it is evident to me that he rails at it and them as a lover does at the faults of his mistress, not loving her the less even while he rails. . . . He has promised to dine with us on Thursday; this being, as he

asserts, the first dinner invitation which he has accepted during two years."

This dinner is described in the "Conversations" and "The Idler in Italy"; the following passage in the latter deserves to be added to the record in the former: "Byron loves to dwell in conversation on his own faults. How far he might endure their recapitulation by another remains to be proved; but I have observed that those persons who display the greatest frankness in acknowledging their errors, are precisely those who most warmly resent their detection by another. . . But it appears to me that Byron is more ready to acknowledge his infirmities than to correct them; nay, that he considers the candour of his confession as an *amende honorable*."

The "Conversations" contain no mention of the intercourse between Byron and the Blessingtons for several days after the incidents last narrated, yet there are many references in "The Idler in Italy" to meetings and excursions. The poet and Lady Blessington rode on horseback to places of interest in the neighbourhood. His talk during the rides was often worthy of preservation on account of its suggestiveness and the light which it threw on his character. Lady Blessington having made it clear to Byron that she was surprised at his insensibility to the beauties of the views which he pointed out, he smiled and said: "I suppose you expected me to explode into some enthusiastic exclamations on the sea,

the scenery, etc., such as poets indulge in, or rather, are supposed to indulge in; but the truth is, I hate cant of any kind, and the cant of the love of nature as much as any other." Byron may have been perfectly sincere in thus speaking; yet it is not easy to determine when he was in earnest or when he was indulging in the cant against which he protested. If he really appreciated these natural beauties, there was more affectation in denying than in admitting the fact. Sir Walter Scott never concealed his love for the scenery at or near to Abbotsford when he pointed out the best views to his guests. However, a softer side to Byron's nature is shown by the Countess, and its existence ought to be borne in mind: "He has a passion for flowers, and purchases bouquets from the vendors on the road, who have tables piled with them. He bestows charity on every mendicant who asks it; and his manner in giving is gentle and kind. The people seem all to know his face, and to like him; and many recount their affairs as if they were sure of his sympathy."

While the Blessingtons were at Genoa, the project of going to Greece as a volunteer was growing into a resolve on Byron's part, and he talked with Lady Blessington of his intention and hopes. She gives in "The Idler in Italy" the substance of his talk, and she adds some comments of her own which are shrewd and just. The following entry was made on April 12: "Byron

asserts that he who is only a poet has done little for mankind, and that *he* will endeavour to prove in his own person that a poet may be a soldier. That Byron will fulfil this self-imposed duty is, I think, nearly certain; and that he will fulfil it bravely I entertain not a doubt; yet, from what I have seen of him, I should say that his vocation is more for a reflective than an active life, and that the details and contrarieties to which, from the position he will hold in Greece, he must be subjected, will exhaust his patience and impair his health."

In the course of a ride with him on April 16, she learned something about his tastes which she did not reproduce in the "Conversations." She notes her surprise at his indifference to works of art, and his remark that "he *feels* art while others *prate* about it." He had not visited a single palace in Genoa, nor had be been once at the opera. He said that he liked music, and he added: "But I do not know the least of it as a science; indeed, I am glad that I do not, for a perfect knowledge might rob it of half its charms. At present I only know that a plaintive air softens and a lively one cheers one. Martial music renders me brave; and voluptuous music disposes me to be luxurious, even effeminate. Now, were I skilled in the science, I should become fastidious, and instead of yielding to the fascination of sweet sounds, I should be analyzing, or criticising, or connoisseurshipizing (to use a word of my own

making), instead of simply enjoying them as at present. In the same way, I never would study botany. I don't want to know why certain flowers please me ; enough for me that they do, and I leave to those who have no better occupation the analysis of the sources of their pleasure, which I can enjoy without the useless trouble."

The Blessingtons remained two months in Genoa, and when they prepared to leave Byron pressed them to stay. On May 5 he accompanied Lady Blessington to a villa near his own at Albaro, which he thought would suit her. She expressed a wish to buy it, and then he wrote the following lines, which owe their point to the fact of the villa being called "Il Paradiso" :

"Beneath Blessington's eyes
The reclaimed paradise
Should be free as the former from evil ;
But if the new Eve
For an apple should grieve,
What mortal would not play the devil ?"

Having written the lines, he laughingly said : "In future times people will come to see *Il Paradiso*, where Byron wrote an impromptu on his countrywoman : thus our names will be associated when we have long ceased to exist." Mr. Madden remarks, on Lady Blessington's authority, that the conceit which he versified had been first spoken in prose. The occasion was a masked ball in Genoa, to which

Byron talked of going, and wished her to accompany him. Someone present having suggested that, if Lady Blessington went, she should personate Eve, Byron exclaimed: "As someone must play the devil, I will do it."

There is a difference of opinion as to the degree of intimacy between Byron and the Blessingtons while the latter sojourned in Genoa, and, if Countess Guiccioli be trusted implicitly, Lady Blessington and Byron did not see each other more than five or six times. On the same authority, it is said that Byron was reluctant to converse freely with a lady who might publish his remarks. On the other hand, Lady Blessington felt convinced that she had exercised a salutary softening influence over Byron, and that her talks with him had proved edifying. Moore's decision is that Lady Blessington accomplished what she aimed at effecting. It is not improbable that jealousy may have caused Countess Guiccioli to regard with unfriendly eyes the association of her lover with a lady whose beauty was the theme of all tongues; she may have remonstrated with Byron, and he may have reassured her by minimizing the number of his meetings with Lady Blessington.

Another reason, however, doubtless influenced Byron in desiring that the departure of the Blessingtons should be delayed. He had been struck with Count D'Orsay at the outset, and he probably delighted in his society as much as in that of Lady

Blessington. During his stay in England the Count had kept a journal, which Byron read and enjoyed, styling it, when writing to the Earl of Blessington, "a most extraordinary production and of a most melancholy truth in all that regards high life in England." On another occasion he sends his compliments to *Alfred*, adding, "I think, since his Majesty of the same name, there has not been such a learned surveyor of our Saxon society." Writing to Count D'Orsay, he said, after praising his journal, "Though I love my country, I do not love my countrymen—at least, such as they now are. And, besides the seduction of talent and wit in your work, I fear that to me there was the attraction of vengeance. I have *seen* and *felt* much of what you have described so well. I have known the persons, and the reunions, so described—many of them, that is to say—and the portraits are so like that I cannot but admire the painter no less than his performance. And I am sorry for you; for if you are so well acquainted with life at your age, what will become of you when the illusion is still more dissipated? But never mind—*en avant!*—live while you can; and that you may have the full enjoyment of the many advantages of youth, talent and figure which you possess is the wish of an—Englishman, I suppose, but it is no treason; for my mother was Scotch, and my name and family are both Norman; and as for myself, I am of no country."

Byron showed the journal to Countess Guiccioli, as appears in a letter from him to the Earl of Blessington, where, after saying that she was a celebrated beauty as well as well educated, he adds that "she was delighted with it," and says that she "has derived a better notion of English society from it than from all Madame de Staël's metaphysical disputations on the same subject, in her work on the Revolution.*

Before their departure, the Blessingtons became the owners of Byron's yacht, *The Bolivar*. It is assumed by some writers that, if he had gone to Greece in this yacht he could not have resisted Countess Guiccioli's entreaties to accompany him.†

* Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, the painstaking author of the "Real Lord Byron," puts these questions at page 203 of the second volume: "What has become of the young Count's journal? In whose keeping does it rest? Will it be found two centuries hence in English libraries, side by side with Grammont's 'Memoirs'?" If so acute an investigator as this should have put such questions, others may be pardoned for not knowing there is an answer to them, which I now supply. On page 324 of the first volume of "The Literary Life and Correspondence of the Countess of Blessington," Mr. Madden writes: "Count D'Orsay's journal was burnt by himself some years back."

† After Byron's death, Countess Guiccioli became the intimate friend of Lady Blessington and often visited her in England. Mr. W. Arthur Shee saw her at Gore House in May, 1837, and writes of her as follows in his recently published work, "My Contemporaries": "I have long wished to see the Guiccioli, and last night I met her at Lady Blessington's. Great was my disappointment. I had pictured to myself one so fair, fragile, and fascinating as to excuse the *entêtement* of Byron. . . . But what

Whatever his reasons for selling the yacht, he drove a hard bargain with its purchaser, the price which he exacted being four hundred guineas. Lady Blessington adds the comment: "The poet is certainly fond of money, and this growing passion displays itself on many occasions." He bought her horse Mameluke, of which she was very fond, and with which she parted reluctantly, and only in compliance with his repeated and urgent requests. Then, after she had consented, he wrote saying that he could not pay more than eighty pounds; she had paid one hundred guineas for the horse, and she would rather have lost two hundred than part with him. Having said this, she adds: "How strange, to beg and entreat to have this horse resigned to him, and then name a less price than he cost!"

The parting took place on June 2, and it was keenly felt on both sides. Byron seemed to have a conviction that the meeting was the last which he would have with any of the party, and he was moved

did I see? The very thing that he has placed on record as being the object of his hatred—'a fubsy woman.' She has now neither youth, striking beauty, nor grace, and it is difficult to believe that she ever could have been the great poet's ideal. She is not tall and is 'thick-set,' devoid of air or style, and, whatever she may have been, is no longer attractive. Her manners, too, are neither high-bred nor gracious, and altogether her appearance and bearing are most *désenchantant.* She sang several Italian airs to her own accompaniment in a very pretentious manner, and her voice is loud and somewhat harsh" (p. 45).

to tears. Lady Blessington remarks, after stating what had occurred: "Should his presentiment be realized and we indeed meet no more, I shall never cease to remember him with kindness: the very idea that I shall not see him again overpowers me with sadness and makes me forget many defects which had often disenchanted me with him."

Before another June came round Lady Blessington wrote in her journal that the intelligence of Byron's death had arrived, and she added: "Alas, alas! his presentiment of dying in Greece has been but too well fulfilled, and I used to banter him on his superstitious presentiment!"

The Blessingtons proceeded from Genoa to Lucca, where they stayed a few days, thence to Florence, where they stayed three weeks. From Florence they journeyed to Rome, which they reached on July 5, 1823, and left on the 14th, being driven from it, as Lady Blessington records, "by oppressive heat and the evil prophecies dinned into my ears of the malaria." She adds: "I have no fears of the effect of either for myself, but I dare not risk them for others." This remark appears to be wholly to the writer's advantage, but Mr. Madden puts a complexion upon it which does not do her credit. He affirms that Lady Blessington had become very fastidious in her tastes; that she did not find in Rome the luxuries which had become necessaries of life to her; that she objected to the

lodgings, and, above all, to the cookery there, and that the abrupt departure from the ancient city was occasioned by her whims and not by a regard for the health of others. The passage which follows serves to explain some things in her life and conduct which would remain mysterious and mistaken without the clue that it furnishes: "With the strongest regard for Lady Blessington, and the fullest appreciation of the many good qualities that belonged to her, it cannot be denied that, whether discoursing in her salons or talking with pen in hand on paper in her journals, she occasionally aimed at something like stage effects, acted in society and in her diaries, and at times assumed opinions which she abandoned a little later, or passed off appearances for realities. This was done with the view of acquiring esteem, strengthening her position in the opinion of persons of exalted intellect or station, and directing attention to the side of it that was brilliant and apparently enviable, not for any unworthy purpose, but from a desire to please, and perhaps from a feeling of uncertainty in the possession of present advantages."

The Blessingtons stayed in Naples till February, 1828. On December 4, 1827,* Count D'Orsay had

* The date given in Madden's "Memoirs of the Countess of Blessington" is December 1, and this is repeated in the "Dictionary of National Biography"; but the 4th is the day named in *The Annual Register* for 1827, and as this entry appeared in the lifetime of all the parties concerned, without objection from any of them, it may be accepted as accurate.

become the husband of Lady Harriet Frances Gardiner, the only legitimate daughter of the Earl of Blessington. This marriage resembled that of Marguerite Power to Captain Farmer at the immature age of fourteen and a half. Lady Harriet Gardiner was fifteen years and four months old, and she was summoned to Naples and commanded to become the wife of Count D'Orsay. The marriage had been determined upon when the Blessingtons were at Genoa. There is not a word extant to show that Lady Blessington objected to the match, and gave any heed to the feelings of her step-daughter. Count D'Orsay profited by the union to the extent of £40,000. Three years after the mercenary bargain had been consummated, the ill-matched pair separated, and the young wife escaped from a state of misery.

The journey to Paris from Naples was made in as leisurely a fashion as the journey from Paris to Genoa. The latter city was twice revisited before leaving Italy. On the first occasion Lady Blessington read several of Byron's letters and manuscripts which were in Mr. Barry's possession. Every object recalled the deceased poet to her mind, and she could hardly think "that *he*, whose image is identified with all I view, is sleeping in an English grave." During the second visit she was walking one day, when she saw a young girl whose features recalled those of Byron; an elderly lady accompanied

her. She was informed that the latter was Lady Byron, and the former was Ada.

Lady Blessington's journal of her trip through France and her stay in Paris was published in 1841, with the title of "The Idler in France." It contains much that is of permanent interest, although the greater part is antiquated and unattractive. Many passages in which she notes the books that she read, and her opinions upon them, serve to display her own mind and tastes. The following passage is curious: "I have been reading 'Vivian Grey,' a very wild but a very clever book, full of genius in its unpruned luxuriance: the writer revels in all the riches of a brilliant imagination, and expends them prodigally, dazzling at one moment by his passionate eloquence, and at another by his touching pathos." Sir Walter Scott had made this entry in his "Journal" not long before: "Reading, among the rest, an odd volume of 'Vivian Grey'; clever, but not so much as to make me, in this sultry weather, go upstairs to the drawing-room to seek the other volumes." Neither knew the writer's name, as the work was anonymous. Lady Blessington afterwards made Benjamin Disraeli's acquaintance; at present she was greatly struck with his father, of whom she wrote: "I never peruse a production of his without longing to be personally acquainted with him; and though we never met, I entertain a regard and respect for him, induced by the many pleasant hours his works have afforded me."

The impression made upon her by the first novel of Bulwer was as strong and favourable as that which was made by the first novel of Disraeli; moreover, her statement shows that Bulwer had been a favourite in Paris from the outset: "'Pelham' is a new style of novel. . . . The writer possesses a felicitous fluency of language, profound and just thoughts, and a knowledge of the world rarely acquired at his age; for I am told he is a very young man. . . . I, who don't like reading novels, heard so much in favour of this one—for all Paris talk of it—that I broke through a resolution to read no more, and I am glad I did so, for this clever book has greatly interested me."

When "Devereux" appeared, she liked it better than "Pelham," and wrote of the author that "his novels produced a totally different effect on one from that exercised by the works of other authors; they amuse less than they make one think." She had a good taste in poetry as well as in novels, and her appreciation of the poets she loved does her credit. She writes: "I have been reading Wordsworth's poems again, and I verily believe for the fiftieth time. They contain a mine of lofty, beautiful and natural thoughts. I never peruse them without feeling proud that England has such a poet, and without finding a love for the pure and noble increased in my mind." Her remarks on Shelley are still more noteworthy. When she penned them the admirers of Shelley were in the

minority, Byron being the first favourite, whereas the reverse is true now: "I have been reading Shelley's works, in which I have found many beautiful thoughts. This man of genius—for decidedly such he was—has not yet been rendered justice to. . . . He who was all charity has found none in the judgment pronounced on him by his contemporaries; but posterity will be more just."

She admired the poetesses as well as the poets of her day, some of whom have not received from posterity the homage with which contemporaries honoured them. "Well may England," she exclaims, "be proud of such poetesses as she can now boast! Johanna Baillie, the noble-minded and elevated; Miss Bowles, the pure and true; Miss Mitford, the gifted and natural; and Mrs. Hemans and Miss Landon, though last not least in the galaxy of genius, with imaginations as brilliant as their hearts are generous and tender." Theodore Hook was as popular in his day as any of the female bards whose names and praises have just been set forth, and Lady Blessington was one of his admirers. After finishing his book styled "Sayings and Doings," she writes of it that "every page teems with wit, humour, or pathos, and reveals a knowledge of the world under all the various phases of the ever-moving scene that gives a lively interest to all he writes."

Captain Marryat is another name which was greater in her day than in ours, though it is still

remembered in connexion with one or two capital novels. Her remarks about him are very acute, and they show that she possessed critical discrimination. Having stated that his "Naval Officer" resembles himself in being full of talent, originality and humour, she adds: "He is an accurate observer of life; nothing escapes him; yet there is no bitterness in his satire and no exaggeration in his comic vein. He is never obliged to explain to his readers *why* the characters he introduces act in such and such a manner. They always bear out the parts he wishes them to enact, and the whole story goes on so naturally that one feels as if reading a narrative of facts, instead of a work of fiction."

In the wide circle of Lady Blessington's acquaintance there were many French as well as English statesmen who had achieved or were on the high road to greatness. Two Englishmen who eventually attained the first place in the hearts of their countrymen are admirably sketched by her in 1829, when they were still in blossom. Lord John Russell was one of them. She pronounces him very agreeable when the reserve which veils his many fine qualities wears off. She holds that few men had a finer taste in literature than he; moreover, Lord John Russell is said by her to be "precisely the person calculated to fill a high official situation. Well informed on all subjects, with an ardent love of his country, and an anxious desire

to serve it, he has a sobriety of judgment and strictness of principle that will for ever place him beyond the reach of suspicion, even to the most prejudiced of his political adversaries."

The other Englishman whom she sketches is Lord Palmerston, and in his case, as in that of him who died Earl Russell, her forecast was amply confirmed. After saying that she found him as intelligent, sensible and agreeable as he was when she knew him in England seven years before, she adds: "Lord Palmerston has much more ability than people are disposed to give him credit for. He is, or used to be, when I lived in England, considered a good man of business, acute in the details, and quick in the comprehension of complicated questions. Even this is no mean praise, but I think him entitled to more; for, though constantly and busily occupied with official duties, he has contrived to find time to read everything worth reading, and to make himself acquainted with the politics of other countries. Lively, well-bred and unaffected, Lord Palmerston is a man that is so well acquainted with the routine of official duties, performs them so readily and pleasantly, and is so free from the assumption of self-importance that too frequently appertains to adepts in them, that, whether Whig or Tory Government has the ascendant in England, his services will be always considered a desideratum to be secured if possible."

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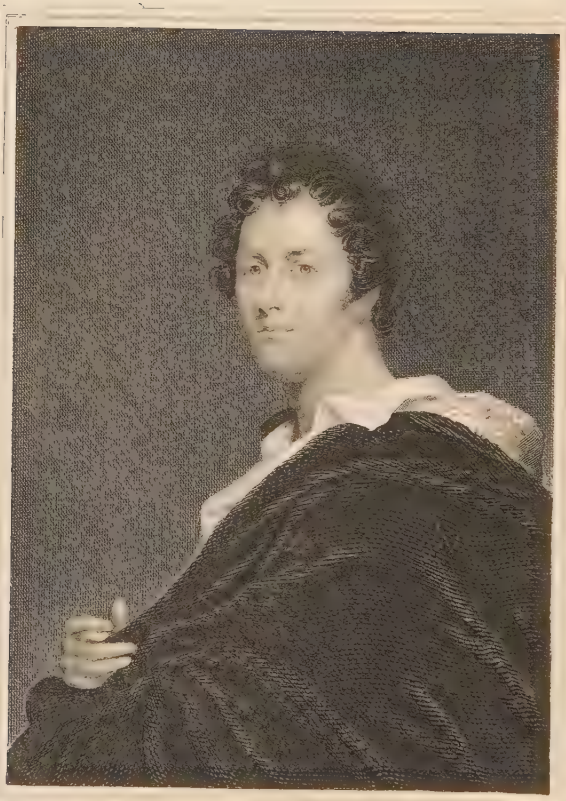

A

JOURNAL

OF THE

CONVERSATIONS OF LORD BYRON

WITH THE

COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

"Wo du das Genie erblickst
Erblickst du auch zugleich die Marterkrone."

GOETHE.

CHAPTER I.

First meeting of Lady Blessington and Lord Byron—Personal appearance of Lord Byron—His lameness—The Casa Saluzzi at Albaro—Mutual friends—Tom Moore—Ellice—"Lalla Rookh"—"When first I met thee"—Irish wit—At Genoa—Lord Holland—Rogers—Lady Holland and the *Edinburgh Review*—Galignani's *Messenger*—The Hon. William Hill—Selfishness and generosity—The "Improving Society"—Douglas Kinnaird—Horse-dealing—The expedition to Greece—Lady Byron—The Hon. Augusta Byron—Byron's conversation.

Genoa, April 1st, 1823.

SAW Lord Byron for the first time. The impression of the first few minutes disappointed me, as I had, both from the portraits and

descriptions given, conceived a different idea of him. I had fancied him taller, with a more dignified and commanding air; and I looked in vain for the hero-looking sort of person with whom I had so long identified him in imagination.

His appearance is, however, highly prepossessing; his head is finely shaped, and the forehead open, high, and noble; his eyes are gray and full of expression, but one is visibly larger than the other; the nose is large and well-shaped, but from being a little *too thick*, it looks better in profile than in front-face: his mouth is the most remarkable feature in his face, the upper lip of Grecian shortness, and the corners descending; the lips full, and finely cut. In speaking, he shows his teeth very much, and they are white and even; but I observed that even in his smile—and he smiles frequently—there is something of a scornful expression in his mouth that is evidently natural, and not, as many suppose, affected. This particularly struck me. His chin is large and well shaped, and finishes well the oval of his face.

He is extremely thin; indeed, so much so that his figure has almost a boyish air; his face is peculiarly pale, but not the paleness of ill-health, as its character is that of fairness, the fairness of a dark-haired person — and his hair (which is

getting rapidly gray) is of a very dark brown, and curls naturally: he uses a good deal of oil in it, which makes it look still darker. His countenance is full of expression, and changes with the subject of conversation; it gains on the beholder the more it is seen, and leaves an agreeable impression. I should say that melancholy was its prevailing character, as I noticed that when any observation elicited a smile—and they were many, as the conversation was gay and playful—it appeared to linger but for a moment on his lip, which instantly resumed its former expression of seriousness. His whole appearance is remarkably gentlemanlike, and he owes nothing of this to his toilet, as his coat appears to have been many years made, is much too large, and all his garments convey the idea of having been purchased ready-made, so ill do they fit him.

There is a *gaucherie* in his movements, which evidently proceeds from the perpetual consciousness of his lameness, that appears to haunt him; for he tries to conceal his foot when seated, and when walking has a nervous rapidity in his manner. He is very slightly lame, and the deformity of his foot is so little remarkable that I am not now aware which foot it is. His voice and accent are peculiarly agreeable, but effeminate—clear, harmonious, and so distinct, that though

his general tone in speaking is rather low than high, not a word is lost.

His manners are as unlike my preconceived notions of them as is his appearance. I had expected to find him a dignified, cold, reserved, and haughty person, resembling those mysterious personages he so loves to paint in his works, and with whom he has been so often identified by the good-natured world: but nothing can be more different; for were I to point out the prominent defect of Lord Byron, I should say it was flippancy, and a total want of that natural self-possession and dignity which ought to characterise a man of birth and education.

Albaro, the village in which the Casa Saluzzi, where he lives, is situated, is about a mile and a half distant from Genoa; it is a fine old palazzo, commanding an extensive view, and with spacious apartments, the front looking into a courtyard, and the back into the garden. The room in which Lord Byron received us was large, and plainly furnished. A small portrait of his daughter Ada, with an engraved portrait of himself, taken from one of his works, struck my eye. Observing that I remarked that of his daughter, he took it down, and seemed much gratified when I discovered the strong resemblance it bore to him. Whilst holding it in his hand, he said: "I am told she is clever—I hope not; and, above all, I

hope she is not poetical. The price paid for such advantages, if advantages they be, is such as to make me pray that my child may escape them."

The conversation during our first interview was chiefly about our mutual English friends, some of whom he spoke of with kind interest. Tom Moore, Douglas Kinnaird, and Mr. Ellice were among those whom he most distinguished.* He expressed himself greatly annoyed by the number of travelling English who pestered him with visits, the greater part of whom he had never known, or was but slightly acquainted with, which obliged him to refuse receiving any but those he particularly wished to see. "But," added he, smiling, "they avenge themselves by attacking me in every sort of way, and there is no story too improbable for the craving appetites of our slander-loving countrymen."

* Thomas Moore, born May 28th, 1779; died February 25th, 1852.—The Hon. Douglas Kinnaird (born February 28th, 1788; died March 12th, 1830) was the fifth son of the seventh Baron Kinnaird. He was a member of the sub-committee for directing Drury Lane Theatre; he sat in Parliament for a short time; he adapted Tom Fletcher's comedy, "The Merchant of Bruges," which was put on the stage of Drury Lane, and he wrote articles relating to India.—The Right Hon. Edward Ellice (born 1791; died September 10th, 1863) was for many years member for Coventry; he was, first, Secretary to the Treasury, and, second, Secretary at War in Earl Grey's administration; he was Chairman of the Hudson Bay Company and the founder of the Reform Club.

Before taking leave, he proposed paying us a visit next day, and he handed me into the carriage with many flattering expressions of the pleasure our visit had procured him.

April 2nd.—We had scarcely finished our *déjeuner à la fourchette* this day when Lord Byron was announced; he sent up two printed cards in an envelope addressed to us, and soon followed them. He appeared still more gay and cheerful than the day before—made various inquiries about all our mutual friends in England—spoke of them with affectionate interest, mixed with a badinage in which none of their little defects were spared; indeed, candour obliges me to own that their defects seemed to have made a deeper impression on his mind than their good qualities (though he allowed all the latter), by the *gusto* with which he entered into them.

He talked of our mutual friend Moore, and of his "Lalla Rookh," which he said, though very beautiful, had disappointed him, adding, that Moore would go down to posterity by his melodies, which were all perfect. He said that he had never been so much *affected* as on hearing Moore sing some of them, particularly "When first I met Thee,"* which, he said, made him

* The following are the first and last of the four stanzas which compose the poem:

shed tears; "but," added he, with a look full of archness, "it was after I had drunk a certain portion of very potent white brandy." As he laid a peculiar stress on the word *affected*, I smiled, and the sequel of the white brandy made me smile again; he asked me the cause, and I answered that his observation reminded me of the story of a lady offering her condolence to a poor Irishwoman on the death of her child, who

"When first I met thee, warm and young,
There shone such truth about thee,
And on thy lip such promise hung,
I did not dare to doubt thee.
I saw thee change, yet still relied,
Still clung with hope the fonder,
And thought, though false to all beside,
From me thou couldst not wander.
But go, deceiver, go,
The heart whose hopes could make it
Trust one so false, so low,
Deserves that thou shouldst break it.

* * * * *

"And days may come, thou false one! yet,
When even those ties shall sever;
When thou wilt call, with vain regret,
On her thou'st lost for ever;
On her who, in thy fortune's fall,
With smiles had still received thee,
And gladly died to prove thee all
Her fancy first believed thee.
Go—go—'tis vain to curse,
'Tis weakness to upbraid thee;
Hate cannot wish thee worse
Than guilt and shame have made thee."

stated that she had never been more affected than on the event. The poor woman, knowing the hollowness of the compliment, answered, with all the quickness of her country, "Sure, then, ma'am, that is saying a great deal, for you were always affected." Lord Byron laughed, and said my apropos was very wicked; but I maintained it was very just. He spoke much more warmly of Moore's social attractions as a companion, which he said were unrivalled, than of his merits as a poet.

He offered to be our cicerone in pointing out all the pretty drives and rides about Genoa; recommended riding as the only means of seeing the country, many of the fine points of view being inaccessible, except on horseback; and he praised Genoa on account of the rare advantage it possessed of having so few English, either as inhabitants or birds of passage.

I was this day again struck by the flippancy of his manner of talking of persons for whom I know he expresses, nay, for whom I believe he feels a regard. Something of this must have shown itself in my manner, for he laughingly observed that he was afraid he should lose my good opinion by his frankness; but that when the fit was on him he could not help saying what he thought, though he often repented it when too late.

He spoke of Mr. ——, from whom he had received a visit the day before, praised his looks, and the insinuating gentleness of his manners, which, he observed, lent a peculiar charm to the little tales he repeated. He said that he had given him more London scandal than he had heard since he left England; observed that he had quite talent enough to render his malice very *piquant* and amusing, and that his imitations were admirable. "How can his mother do without him?" said Byron; "with his *espièglerie* and malice he must be an invaluable coadjutor; and Venus without Cupid could not be more *délaissée* than *Milady* —— without this her legitimate son."

He said that he had formerly felt very partial to Mr. ——; his face was so handsome, and his countenance so ingenuous, that it was impossible not to be prepossessed in his favour; added to which, one hoped that the son of such a father could never entirely degenerate. "He has, however, degenerated sadly," said Byron, "but as he is yet young he may improve; though, to see a person of his age and *sex* so devoted to gossip and scandal, is rather discouraging to those who are interested in his welfare."

He talked of Lord Holland; praised his urbanity, his talents, and acquirements; but above all, his sweetness of temper and good-

nature. "Indeed, I do love Lord Holland," said Byron, "though the pity I feel for his domestic thraldom has something in it akin to contempt. Poor dear man! he is sadly bullied by *Milady*; and, what is worst of all, half her tyranny is used on the plea of kindness and taking care of his health. Hang such kindness! say I.

"She is certainly the most imperious, dictatorial person I know—is always *en reine*; which, by the by, in her peculiar position, shows tact, for she suspects that were she to quit the throne she might be driven to the antechamber; however, with all her faults, she is not vindictive—as a proof, she never extended her favour to me until after the little episode respecting her in 'English Bards;' nay more, I suspect I owe her friendship to it. Rogers persuaded me to suppress the passage in the other editions.* After all, Lady

* "Dunedin! view thy children with delight,
They write for food—and feed because they write;
And lest when heated with unusual grape,
Some glowing thoughts should to the press escape,
And tinge with red the female reader's cheek,
My lady skims the cream of each critique;
Breathes o'er the page her purity of soul,
Reforms each error, and refines the whole."

English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.

In a footnote to this passage Byron states on what he calls "good authority" that the manuscripts of contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* were submitted to Lady Holland for perusal; he adds, "no doubt, for correction." No doubt exists about the assertion being as false as it is absurd.

Holland has one merit, and a great one in my eyes, which is, that in this age of cant and humbug, and in a country—I mean our own dear England—where the cant of Virtue is the order of the day, she has contrived, without any great resemblance of it, merely by force of—shall I call it impudence or courage?—not only to get herself into society, but absolutely to give the law to her own circle. She passes, also, for being clever; this, perhaps owing to my dulness, I never discovered, except that she has a way, *en reine*, of asking questions that show some reading. The first dispute I ever had with Lady Byron was caused by my urging her to visit Lady Holland; and, what is odd enough," laughing with bitterness, "our first and last differences were caused by two very worthless women."

Observing that we appeared surprised at the extraordinary frankness, to call it by no harsher name, with which he talked of his *ci-devant* friends, he added: "Don't think the worse of me for what I have said: the truth is, I have witnessed such gross selfishness and want of feeling in Lady Holland, that I cannot resist speaking my sentiments of her." I observed: "But are you not afraid she will hear what you say of her?" He answered: "Were she to hear it, she would act the *aimable*, as she always does to those who attack her; while to those who are

attentive, and court her, she is insolent beyond bearing."

Having sat with us above two hours, and expressed his wishes that we might prolong our stay at Genoa, he promised to dine with us the following Thursday, and took his leave, laughingly apologizing for the length of his visit, adding, that he was such a recluse, and had lived so long out of the world, that he had quite forgotten the usages of it.

He on all occasions professes a detestation of what he calls *cant*; says it will banish from England all that is pure and good; and that while people are looking after the shadow, they lose the substance of goodness; he says, that the best mode left for conquering it, is to expose it to *ridicule*, the only *weapon*, added he, that the English climate cannot rust. He appears to know everything that is going on in England; takes a great interest in the London gossip; and while professing to read no new publications, betrays, in various ways, a perfect knowledge of every new work.

"April 2nd, 1823.

"My dear Lord,

"I send you to-day's (the latest) Galignani's [*Messenger*]. My banker tells me, however, that his letters from Spain state that two regiments have revolted, which is a great vex, as they say in Ireland. I shall be very glad to see your friend's journal. He seems to have all the qualities requisite to have figured in his brother-in-law's ancestor's Memoirs. I did *not* think him old

enough to have served in Spain, and must have expressed myself badly. On the contrary, he has all the air of a *Cupidon déchaîné*, and promises to have it for some time to come. I beg to present my respects to Lady Blessington, and ever am,

"Your obliged and faithful servant,

"NOEL BYRON."

When Lord Byron came to dine with us on Thursday, he arrived an hour before the usual time, and appeared in good spirits. He said that he found the passages and stairs filled with people, who stared at him very much; but he did not seem vexed at this homage, for so it certainly was meant, as the Albergo della Villa, where we resided, being filled with English, all were curious to see their distinguished countryman. He was very gay at dinner, ate of most of the dishes, expressed pleasure at partaking of a plum pudding, *à l'Anglaise*, made by one of our English servants; was helped twice, and observed, that he hoped he should not shock us by eating so much: "But," added he, "the truth is, that for several months I have been following a most abstemious *régime*, living almost entirely on vegetables; and now that I see a good dinner, I cannot resist temptation, though to-morrow I shall suffer for my gourmandize, as I always do when I indulge in luxuries." He drank a few glasses of champagne, saying, that as he considered it a *jour de fête*, he would eat, drink, and be merry.

He talked of Mr. Hill, who was then our

Minister at Genoa.* "Hill," said he, "is a thorough good-natured and hospitable man, keeps an excellent table, and is as fond of good things as I am, but has not my forbearance. I received, some time ago, a *pâté de Perigord*, and finding it excellent, I determined on sharing it with Hill; but here my natural selfishness suggested that it would be wiser for me, who had so few dainties, to keep this for myself, than to give it to Hill, who had so many. After half an hour's debate between selfishness and generosity, which do you think" (turning to me) "carried the point?" I answered, "Generosity, of course." "No, by Jove!" said he, "no such thing; selfishness in this case, as in most others, triumphed: I sent the *pâté* to my friend Hill, because I felt another dinner off it would play the deuce with me; and so you see, after all, he owed the *pâté* more to selfishness than generosity." Seeing us smile at this, he said: "When you know me better, you will find that I am the most selfish person in the world; I have, however, the merit, if it be one, of not only being perfectly conscious of my faults, but of never denying them; and this surely is something in this age of cant and hypocrisy."

* This is inaccurate. Genoa was ceded to Sardinia in 1815, and at the time Lady Blessington wrote her journal, the Hon. William Hill was Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the Court of St. James's to that of Turin.

The journal to which Lord Byron refers was written by one of our party,* and Lord Byron, having discovered its existence, and expressed a desire to peruse it, the writer confided it to him.

"April 14th, 1823.

"My dear Lord,

"I was not in the way when your note came. I have only time to thank you, and to send the Galignanis. My face is better in fact, but worse in appearance, with a very *scurvy* aspect; but I expect it to be well in a day or two. I will subscribe to the Improving Society.†

"Yours in haste, but ever,

"Noel Byron."

"April 22nd, 1823.

"Milor,

"I received your billet at dinner, which was a good one—with a sprinkling of female foreigners, who, I dare say, were very agreeable. As I have formed a sullen resolution about presentations, which I never break (above once a month), I begged —— to dispense me from being introduced, and intrigued for myself a place as far remote as possible from his fair guests, and very near a bottle of the best wine to confirm my misogyny. After coffee I had accomplished my retreat as far as the hall, on full tilt towards your *thé*, which I was very eager to partake of, when I was arrested by —— requesting that I would make my bow to the French Ambassadress, who it seems is a Dillon, Irish, but born or bred in America; has been pretty, and is a *blue*, and of course entitled to the homage of all persons who have been printed. I returned, and it was then too late to detain Miss

* Count Alfred D'Orsay.

† Probably the Reading Association or Book Club referred to in the subsequent letter to Lord Blessington, dated May 14th, 1823.

Power over the tea-urn. I beg you to accept my regrets, and present my regards to Milady, and Miss Power, and Comte Alfred, and believe me,

"Ever yours,
"NOEL BYRON."

"April 23rd, 1823.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I thank you for quizzing me and my 'learned Thebans.' I assure you, my notions on that score are limited to getting away with a whole skin, or sleeping quietly with a broken one, in some of my old Glens where I used to dream in my former excursions. I should prefer a gray Greek stone over me to Westminster Abbey; but I doubt if I shall have the luck to die so happily. A lease of my 'body's length' is all the land which I should covet in that quarter.

"What the Honourable Dug [Douglas Kinnaird] and his Committee may decide, I do not know, and still less what I may decide (for I am not famous for decision) for myself; but if I could do any good in any way, I should be happy to contribute thereto, and without *éclat*. I have seen enough of that in my time, to rate it at its value. I wish *you* were upon that Committee, for I think you would set them going one way or the other; at present they seem a little dormant. I dare not venture to *dine* with you to-morrow, nor indeed any day this week; for *three* days of dinners during the last seven days have made me so headachy and sulky that it will take me a whole Lent to subside again into anything like independence of sensation from the pressure of materialism. . . . But I shall take my chance of finding you the first fair morning for a visit.

"Ever yours,
"NOEL BYRON."

"May 7th, 1823.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I return the poesy, which will form a new light to lighten the Irish, and will, I hope, be duly appreciated by the public. I have not returned *Miladi's* verses, because I am not aware of the

error she mentions, and see no reason for the alteration; however, if she insists, I must be conformable. I write in haste, having a visitor.

"Ever yours, very truly,
"NOEL BYRON."

"May 14th, 1823.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I avize you that the Reading Association have received numbers of English publications, which you may like to see, and as you are a member should avail yourself of early. I have just returned my share before its time, having kept the books *one* day instead of *five*, which latter is the utmost allowance. The rules obliged me to forward it to a Monsieur G——, as next in rotation. If you have anything for England, a gentleman with some law papers of mine returns there to-morrow (Thursday), and would be happy to convey anything for you.

"Ever yours, and truly,
"NOEL BYRON.

"P.S.—I request you to present my compliments to Lady Blessington, Miss Power, and Comte D'Orsay."

"May 23rd, 1823.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I thought that I *had* answered your note. I ought, and beg you to excuse the omission. I should have called, but I thought my chance of finding you at *home* in the environs greater than at the hotel. . . . I hope you will not take my *not* dining with you again after so many dinners ill; but the truth is, that your banquets are too luxurious for my habits, and I feel the effect of them in this warm weather for some time after. I am sure you will not be angry, since I have already more than sufficiently abused your hospitality. . . . I fear that I can hardly afford more than two thousand francs for the steed in question,*

* Lady Blessington's horse Mameluke, for which 100 guineas had been paid. Byron's offer was £80.

as I have to undergo considerable expenses at this present time, and I suppose that will not suit you. I must not forget to pay my Irish subscription. My remembrances to *Miladi*, and to Alfred, and to Miss Power.

"Ever yours,
"NOEL BYRON."

"May 24th, 1823.

"MY DEAR LORD,

"I find that I was elected a member of the Greek Committee in March, but did not receive the chairman's notice till yesterday, and this by mere chance, and through a private hand. I am doing all I can to get away, and the Committee and my friends in England seem both to approve of my going up into Greece; but I meet here with obstacles, which have hampered and put me out of spirits, and still keep me in a vexatious state of uncertainty. I began bathing the other day, but the water was still chilly, and in diving for a Genoese *lira* in clear but deep water, I imbibed so much water through my ears as gave me a *megrim* in my head, which you will probably think a superfluous malady.

"Ever yours, obliged and truly,
"NOEL BYRON."

In all his conversations relative to Lady Byron, and they are frequent, he declares that he is totally unconscious of the cause of her leaving him, but suspects that the ill-natured interposition of Mrs. Charlemont led to it.* It is a strange business! He declares that he left no means untried to effect a reconciliation, and

* Lady Byron's remarks on this matter are to be found at page 275 of the sixth volume of Moore's "Life of Byron," the edition being that which appeared in 1832.

always adds with bitterness, "A day will arrive when I shall be avenged. I feel that I shall not live long, and when the grave has closed over me, what must she feel!" All who wish well to Lady Byron must desire that she should not survive her husband, for the all-atoning grave, that gives oblivion to the errors of the dead, clothes those of the living in such sombre colours to their own too-late awakened feelings, as to render them wretched for life, and more than avenges the real or imagined wrongs of those we have lost for ever.

When Lord Byron was praising the mental and personal qualifications of Lady Byron, I asked him how all that he now said agreed with certain sarcasms supposed to bear a reference to her, in his works. He smiled, shook his head, and said they were meant to spite and vex her, when he was wounded and irritated at her refusing to receive or answer his letters; that he was not sincere in his implied censures, and that he was sorry he had written them; but notwithstanding this regret, and all his good resolutions to avoid similar sins, he might on renewed provocation recur to the same vengeance, though he allowed it was petty and unworthy of him. Lord Byron speaks of his sister, Mrs. Leigh, constantly, and always with strong expressions of affection; he says she is the most faultless person he ever

knew, and that she was his only source of consolation in his troubles on the separation.*

Byron is a great talker; his flippancy ceases in a *tête-à-tête*, and he becomes sententious, abandoning himself to the subject, and seeming to think aloud, though his language has the appearance of stiffness, and is quite opposed to the trifling chit-chat that he enters into when in general society. I attribute this to his having lived so much alone, as also to the desire he now professes of applying himself to prose writing. He affects a sort of Johnsonian tone, likes very much to be listened to, and seems to observe the effect he produces on his hearer. In mixed society his ambition is to appear the man of fashion; he adopts a light tone of badinage and persiflage that does not sit gracefully on him, but is always anxious to turn the subject to his own personal affairs, or feelings, which are either lamented with an air of melancholy, or dwelt on with playful ridicule, according to the humour he happens to be in.

* The Hon. Augusta Byron, daughter of Byron's father by his marriage with Baroness Conyers, who became the wife of Colonel Leigh in 1807.

CHAPTER II.

Colonel Montgomery—Letter from Byron to Lady Blessington—Lady Byron's portrait—Byron's wishes regarding his daughter—Literary women—Madame de Staël—Her brilliant conversation—A solecism—Epigrams—Literary reputation—Napoleon—His "persecution" of Madame de Staël—"Corinne"—A lecture on morals—Byron's misjudgment of himself—His love of gossip—Madame Benzoni—The Duke of Leeds—Byron's superstitious nature—Shelley's belief in ghosts—Byron's indifference to works of art—His suspicion—"*Sacred* should the stream of sorrow flow."

A FRIEND of ours, Colonel Montgomery, having arrived at Genoa, spent much of his time with us. Lord Byron soon discovered this, and became shy, embarrassed in his manner, and out of humour. The first time I had an opportunity of speaking to him without witnesses was on the road to Nervi, on horseback, when he asked me if I had not observed a great change in him. I allowed that I had, and asked him the cause; and he told me, that knowing Colonel Montgomery to be a friend of Lady Byron's, and believing him to be an enemy of his, he expected that he would endeavour to influence us against him, and finally succeed in depriving him of our

friendship; and that this was the cause of his altered manner. I endeavoured to convince him, and at length succeeded, that Colonel Montgomery was too good and honourable a man to do anything spiteful or ill-natured, and that he never spoke ill of him; which seemed to gratify him. He told me that Colonel Montgomery's sister was the intimate and confidential friend of Lady Byron, and that through this channel I might be of great use to him, if I would use my influence with Colonel Montgomery, to make his sister write to Lady Byron for a copy of her portrait, which he had long been most anxious to possess. Colonel Montgomery, after much entreaty, consented to write to his sister on the subject, but on the express condition that Lord Byron should specify on paper his exact wishes; and I wrote to Lord Byron to this effect, to which letter I received the following answer. I ought to add, that in conversation I told Lord Byron that it was reported that Lady Byron was in delicate health, and also that it was said she was apprehensive that he intended to claim his daughter, or to interfere in her education: he refers to this in the letter which I copy:

"May 3rd, 1823.

"DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,

"My request would be for a copy of the miniature of Lady Byron which I have seen in possession of the late Lady Noel, as I have no picture, or indeed memorial of any kind, of

Lady Byron, as all her letters were in my own possession before I left England, and we have had no correspondence since—at least, on her part. My message with regard to the infant is simply to this effect: That in the event of any accident occurring to the mother, and my remaining the survivor, it would be my wish to have her plans carried into effect, both with regard to the education of the child, and the person or persons under whose care Lady Byron might be desirous that she should be placed. It is not my intention to interfere with her on the subject during her life; and I would presume it would be some consolation to her to know (if she is in ill-health, as I am given to understand) that in no case would anything be done, as far as I am concerned, but in strict conformity with Lady Byron's own wishes and intentions—left in whatever manner she thought proper.

"Believe me, dear Lady Blessington,

"Your obliged, etc."

Talking of literary women, Lord Byron said that Madame de Staël was certainly the cleverest, though not the most agreeable woman he had ever known. "She declaimed to you instead of conversing with you," said he, "never pausing except to take breath; and if during that interval a rejoinder was put in, it was evident that she did not attend to it, as she resumed the thread of her discourse as though it had not been interrupted."

This remark from Byron was amusing enough, as we had all made nearly the same observation on him, with the exception that he listened to, and noticed, any answer made to his reflections. "Madame de Staël," continued Byron, "was very eloquent when her imagination warmed,

(and a very little excited it); her powers of imagination were much stronger than her reasoning ones, perhaps owing to their being much more frequently exercised; her language was recondite, but redundant; and though always flowery, and often brilliant, there was an obscurity that left the impression that she did not perfectly understand what she endeavoured to render intelligible to others. She constantly lost herself in philosophical disquisition, and once she got entangled in the mazes of the labyrinth of metaphysics, she had no clue by which she could guide her path—the imagination that led her into her difficulties could not get her out of them; the want of a mathematical education, which might have served as a ballast to steady and help her into the port of reason, was always visible, and though she had great tact in concealing her defeat, and covering a retreat, a tolerable logician must have always discovered the scrapes she got into.

"Poor dear Madame de Staël! I shall never forget seeing her one day, at table with a large party, when the busk (I believe you ladies call it) of her corset forced its way through the top of the corset, and would not descend though pushed by all the force of both hands of the wearer, who became crimson from the operation. After fruitless efforts, she turned in despair to the

valet de chambre behind her chair, and requested him to draw it out, which could only be done by his passing his hand from behind over her shoulder, and across her chest, when, with a desperate effort, he unsheathed the busk. Had you seen the faces of some of the English ladies of the party, you would have been like me, almost convulsed ; while Madame remained perfectly unconscious that she had committed any solecism on *la décence Anglaise*. Poor Madame de Staël verified the truth of the lines—

"'Qui de son sexe n'a pas l'esprit,
De son sexe a tout le malheur.'

She *thought* like a man, but, alas ! she *felt* like a woman ; as witness the episode in her life with Monsieur Rocca, which she dared not avow (I mean her marriage with him), because she was more jealous of her reputation as a writer than a woman, and the *faiblesse de cœur*, this alliance proved she had not courage to *affiche*. A friend of hers, and a compatriot into the bargain, whom she believed to be one of the most adoring of her worshippers, gave me the following epigrams :

"'SUR LA GROSSESSE DE MADAME DE STAËL.

'' Quel esprit ! quel talent ! quel sublime génie !
En elle tout aspire à l'immortalité ;
Et jusqu'à son hydropisie,
Rien n'est perdu pour la postérité.'

"'PORTRAIT DE MADAME DE STAËL.

"'Armande a pour esprit des momens de délire,
Armande a pour vertu le mépris des appas :
Elle craint la railleur que sans cesse elle inspire,
Elle évite l'amant que ne la cherche pas :
Puisqu'elle n'a point l'art de cacher son visage,
Et qu'elle a la fureur de montrer son esprit,
Il faut la défier de cesser d'être sage
Et d'entendre ce qu'elle dit.'

"The giving the epigrams to me, a brother of the craft of authors, was worthy of a friend, and was another proof, if proof were wanting, of the advantages of friends :

"'No epigram such pointed satire lends
As does the memory of our faithful friends.'

I have an exalted opinion of friendship, as you see. You look incredulous, but you will not only give me credit for being sincere in this opinion, but one day arrive at the same conclusion yourself. 'Shake not thy *jetty* locks at me :' ten years hence, if we both live so long, you will allow that I am right, though you now think me a cynic for saying all this.

"Madame de Staël," continued Byron, "had peculiar satisfaction in impressing on her auditors the severity of the persecution she underwent from Napoleon : a certain mode of enraging her, was to appear to doubt the extent to which she wished it to be believed this had been pushed, as

she looked on the persecution as a triumphant proof of her literary and political importance, which she more than insinuated Napoleon feared might subvert his government. This was a weakness, but a common one. One half of the clever people of the world believe they are hated and persecuted, and the other half imagine they are admired and beloved. Both are wrong, and both false conclusions are produced by vanity, though that vanity is the strongest which believes in the hatred and persecution, as it implies a belief of extraordinary superiority to account for it."

I could not suppress the smile that Byron's reflections excited, and, with his usual quickness, he instantly felt the application I had made of them to himself, for he blushed, and half angry, half laughing, said: "Oh! I see what you are smiling at; you think that I have described my own case, and proved myself guilty of vanity." I allowed that I thought so, as he had a thousand times repeated to me, that he was feared and detested in England, which I never would admit. He tried various arguments to prove to me that it was not vanity, but a knowledge of the fact, that made him believe himself detested: but I continuing to smile and look incredulous, he got really displeased, and said: "You have such a provoking memory,

that you compare notes of all one's different opinions, so that one is sure to get into a scrape."

Byron observed, that he once told Madame de Staël that he considered her "Delphine" and "Corinne" as very dangerous productions to be put into the hands of young women. I asked him how she received this piece of candour, and he answered: "Oh! just as all such candid avowals are received—she never forgave me for it. She endeavoured to prove to me that, *au contraire*, the tendencies of both her novels were supereminently moral. I begged that we might not enter on 'Delphine,' as that was *hors de question* (she was furious at this), but that all the moral world thought, that her representing all the virtuous characters in 'Corinne' as being dull, common-place, and tedious, was a most insidious blow aimed at virtue, and calculated to throw it into the shade. She was so excited and impatient to attempt a refutation, that it was only by my volubility I could keep her silent. She interrupted me every moment by gesticulating, exclaiming: '*Quel idée!*' '*Mon Dieu!*' '*Ecoutez donc!*' '*Vous m'impatientez!*'—but I continued saying, how dangerous it was to inculcate the belief that genius, talent, acquirements, and accomplishments, such as Corinne was represented to possess, could not preserve a woman

from becoming a victim to an unrequited passion, and that reason, absence, and female pride were unavailing.

"I told her that 'Corinne' would be considered, if not cited, as an excuse for violent *passions*, by all young ladies with imaginations *exalté*, and that she had much to answer for. Had you seen her! I now wonder how I had courage to go on; but I was in one of my humours, and had heard of her commenting on me one day, so I determined to pay her off. She told me that I, above *all people*, was the last person that ought to talk of morals, as nobody had done more to deteriorate them. I looked innocent, and added, I was willing to plead guilty of having sometimes represented vice under alluring forms, but so it was generally in the world, therefore it was necessary to paint it so; but that I never represented virtue under the sombre and disgusting shapes of dulness, severity, and *ennui*, and that I always took care to represent the votaries of vice as unhappy themselves, and entailing unhappiness on those who loved them; so that *my moral* was unexceptionable. She was perfectly outrageous, and the more so, as I appeared calm and in earnest, though I assure you it required an effort, as I was ready to laugh outright at the idea that *I*, who was at that period considered the

most *mauvais sujet* of the day, should give Madame de Staël a lecture on morals; and I knew that this added to her rage. I also knew she never dared avow that *I* had taken such a liberty.

"She was, notwithstanding her little defects, a fine creature, with great talents, and many noble qualities, and had a simplicity quite extraordinary, which led her to believe everything people told her, and consequently to be continually hoaxed, of which I saw such proofs in London. Madame de Staël it was who first lent me 'Adolphe,' which you like so much; it is very clever, and very affecting. A friend of hers told me that she was supposed to be the heroine, and I, with my *aimable franchise*, insinuated as much to her, which rendered her furious. She proved to me how impossible it was that it could be so, which I already knew, and complained of the malice of the world for supposing it possible."

Byron has remarkable penetration in discovering the characters of those around him, and he piques himself extremely on it; he also thinks he has fathomed the recesses of his own mind, but he is mistaken; with much that is *little* (which he suspects) in his character, there is much that is *great*, for which he does not give himself credit; his first impulses are always good, but his temper, which is impatient, prevents his

acting on the cool dictates of reason; and it appears to me, that in judging himself, Byron mistakes temper for character, and takes the ebullitions of the first for the indications of the nature of the second. He declares that, in addition to his other failings, avarice is now established.

This new vice, like all the others he attributes to himself, he talks of as one would name those of an acquaintance, in a sort of deprecating, yet half-mocking tone, as much as to say, "You see I know all my faults better than you do, though I don't choose to correct them." Indeed, it has often occurred to me that he brings forward his defects, as if in anticipation of someone else exposing them, which he would not like; as, though he affects the contrary, he is jealous of being found fault with, and shows it in a thousand ways.

He affects to dislike hearing his works praised or referred to—I say affects, because I am sure the dislike is not real or natural; as one who loves praise, as Byron evidently does, in other things, cannot dislike it for that in which he must be conscious it is deserved. He refers to his feats in horsemanship, shooting at a mark, and swimming, in a way that proves he likes to be complimented on them; and nothing appears to give him more satisfaction than being con-

sidered a man of fashion, who had great success in fashionable society in London when he resided there. He is peculiarly compassionate to the poor. I remarked that he rarely, in our rides, passed a mendicant without giving him charity, which was invariably bestowed with gentleness and kindness; this was still more observable if the person was deformed, as if he sympathized with the object.

Byron is very fond of gossiping, and of hearing what is going on in the London fashionable world; his friends keep him *au courant*, and any little scandal amuses him very much. I observed this to him one day, and added, that I thought his mind had been too great to descend to such trifles! He laughed, and said with mock gravity: "Don't you know that the trunk of an elephant, which can lift the most ponderous weights, disdains not to take up the most minute? This is the case with my *great* mind (laughing anew), and you must allow the simile is worthy the subject. Jesting apart, I do like a little scandal; I believe all English people do.

"An Italian lady, Madame Benzoni, talking to me on the prevalence of this taste among my compatriots, observed, that when she first knew the English, she thought them the most spiteful and ill-natured people in the world, from hearing them constantly repeating evil of each other;

but having seen various amiable traits in their characters, she had arrived at the conclusion that they were not naturally *méchant ;* but that living in a country like England, where severity of morals punishes so heavily any dereliction from propriety, each individual, to prove personal correctness, was compelled to attack the *sins* of his or her acquaintance, as it furnished an opportunity of expressing his abhorrence by words, instead of proving it by actions, which might cause some self-denial to themselves. This," said Byron, "was an ingenious, as well as charitable supposition ; and we must all allow that it is infinitely more easy to decry and expose the sins of others than to correct our own ; and many find the first so agreeable an occupation that it precludes the second ; this, at least, is my case.*

"The Italians do not understand the English,"

* "Once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. . . . We reflect very complacently on our own severity, and compare with great pride the high standard of morals established in England with the Parisian laxity. At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heart-broken. And our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more."—MACAULAY.

said Byron; "indeed, how can they? for they (the Italians) are frank, simple, and open in their natures, following the bent of their inclinations, which they do not believe to be wicked; while the English, to conceal the indulgence of theirs, daily practise hypocrisy, falsehood, and uncharitableness; so that to *one* error is added many crimes." Byron had now got on a favourite subject, and went on decrying hypocrisy and cant, mingling sarcasms and bitter observations on the false delicacy of the English. It is strange, but true as strange, that he could not, or at least did not, distinguish between cause and effect in this case. The respect for virtue will always cause spurious imitations of it to be given; and what he calls hypocrisy is but the respect paid to public opinion that induces people, who have not courage to correct their errors, at least to endeavour to conceal them; and Cant is the homage that Vice pays to Virtue.* We do not value the diamond less because there are so many worthless imitations of it, and Goodness loses nothing of her intrinsic value because so many wish to be thought to possess it. That nation may be

* Lady Blessington attributes this saying to Rochefoucauld. But he wrote "hypocrisy," which differs from "cant," for which there is no equivalent in French. A Frenchman writes "le cant Britannique" when he desires to express what the word implies. An Englishman will write about "a canting hypocrite."

considered to possess the most virtue where it is the most highly appreciated; and that the least, where it is so little understood, that the semblance is not even assumed.

About this period the Duke of Leeds and family arrived at Genoa, and passed a day or two there at the same hotel where we were residing. Shortly after their departure Byron came to dine with us, and expressed his mortification at the Duke's not having called on him, were it only out of respect to Mrs. Leigh, who was the half-sister of both. This seemed to annoy him so much that I endeavoured to point out the inutility of ceremony between people who could have no two ideas in common, and observed that the *gêne* of finding one's self with people of totally different habits and feelings was ill repaid by the respect their civility indicated. Byron is a person to be excessively bored by the constraint that any change of system would occasion, even for a day; but yet his *amour propre* is wounded by any marks of incivility or want of respect he meets with. Poor Byron! He is still far from arriving at the philosophy that he aims at and thinks he has acquired, when the absence or presence of a person who is indifferent to him, whatever his station in life may be, can occupy his thoughts for a moment.

I have observed in Byron a habit of attaching

importance to trifles, and, *vice-versâ*, turning serious events into ridicule; he is extremely superstitious, and seems offended with those who cannot, or will not, partake this weakness. He has frequently touched on this subject, and tauntingly observed to me that I must believe myself wiser than him, because I was not superstitious. I answered that the vividness of his imagination, which was proved by his works, furnished a sufficient excuse for his superstition, which was caused by an over-excitement of that faculty; but that *I*, not being blessed by the *camera lucida* of imagination, could have no excuse for the *camera obscura*, which I considered superstition to be. This did not, however, content him, and I am sure he left me with a lower opinion of my faculties than before. To deprecate his anger, I observed that Nature was so wise and good that she gave compensations to all her offspring; that as to him she had given the brightest gift—genius, so to those whom she had not so distinguished she gave the less brilliant, but perhaps as useful, gift of plain and unsophisticated reason. This did not satisfy his *amour propre*, and he left me, evidently displeased at my want of superstition.

Byron is, I believe, sincere in his belief in supernatural appearances; he assumes a grave and mysterious air when he talks on the subject,

which he is fond of doing, and has told me some extraordinary stories relative to Mr. Shelley,* who, he assures me, had an implicit belief in ghosts. He also told me that Mr. Shelley's spectre had appeared to a lady, walking in a garden, and he seemed to lay great stress on this. Though some of the wisest of mankind, as witness Johnson, shared this weakness in common with Byron, still there is something so unusual in our matter-of-fact days in giving way to it, that I was at first doubtful that Byron was serious in his belief. He is also superstitious about days, and other trifling things—believes in lucky and unlucky days—dislikes undertaking anything on a Friday, helping or being helped to salt at table, spilling salt or oil, letting bread fall, and breaking mirrors; in short, he gives way to a thousand fantastical notions, that prove that even *l'esprit le plus fort* has its weak side.

Having declined riding with Byron one day, on the plea of going to visit some of the Genoese palaces and pictures, it furnished him with a subject of attack at our next interview; he declared that he never believed people serious in their admiration of pictures, statues, etc., and that those who expressed the most admiration

* Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose fame as a poet is not second to that of Byron, was born August 4th, 1792, and died by drowning between Leghorn and Spezzia July 8th, 1822.

were *Amatori senza Amore*, and *Conoscitori senza Cognizione*. I replied, that as I had never talked to him of pictures, I hoped he would give me credit for being sincere in my admiration of them: but he was in no humour to give one credit for anything on this occasion, as he felt that our giving a preference to seeing sights, when we might have passed the hours with him, was not flattering to his vanity.

I should say that Byron was not either skilled in, or an admirer of, works of art; he confessed to me that very few had excited his attention, and that to admire these he had been forced to draw on his imagination. Of objects of taste or virtù he was equally regardless, and antiquities had no interest for him; nay, he carried this so far, that he disbelieved the possibility of their exciting interest in anyone, and said that they merely served as excuses for indulging the vanity and ostentation of those who had no other means of exciting attention. Music he liked, though he was no judge of it: he often dwelt on the power of association it possessed, and declared that the notes of a well-known air could transport him to distant scenes and events, presenting objects before him with a vividness that quite banished the present. Perfumes, he said, produced the same effect, though less forcibly, and, added he, with his mocking smile, "often make me quite sentimental."

Byron is of a very suspicious nature; he dreads imposition on all points, declares that he foregoes many things, from the fear of being cheated in the purchase, and is afraid to give way to the natural impulses of his character, lest he should be duped or mocked. This does not interfere with his charities, which are frequent and liberal; but he has got into a habit of calculating even his most trifling personal expenses, that is often ludicrous, and would in England expose him to ridicule. He indulges in a self-complacency when talking of his own defects, that is amusing; and he is more willing than reluctant to bring them into observation. He says that money is wisdom, knowledge, and power, all combined, and that this conviction is the only one he has in common with all his countrymen. He dwells with great asperity on an acquaintance to whom he lent some money, and who had not repaid him.

Byron seems to take a peculiar pleasure in ridiculing sentiment and romantic feelings; and yet the day after will betray both, to an extent that appears impossible to be sincere, to those who had heard his previous sarcasms: that he is sincere, is evident, as his eyes fill with tears, his voice becomes tremulous, and his whole manner evinces that he feels what he says. All this appears so inconsistent, that it destroys sym-

pathy, or if it does not quite do that, it makes one angry with one's self for giving way to it for one who is never two days of the same way of thinking, or at least expressing himself. He talks for effect, likes to excite astonishment, and certainly destroys in the minds of his auditors all confidence in his stability of character. This must, I am certain, be felt by all who have lived much in his society; and the impression is not satisfactory.

Talking one day of his domestic misfortunes, as he always called his separation from Lady Byron, he dwelt in a sort of unmanly strain of lamentation on it, which all present felt to be unworthy of him; and, as the evening before I had heard this habitude of his commented on by persons indifferent about his feelings, who even ridiculed his making it a topic of conversation with mere acquaintances, I wrote a few lines in verse, expressive of my sentiments, and handed it across the table round which we were seated, as he was sitting for his portrait. He read them, became red and pale by turns, with anger, and threw them down on the table, with an expression of countenance that is not to be forgotten. The following are the lines, which had nothing to offend; but they did offend him deeply, and he did not recover his temper during the rest of his stay.

"And canst thou bare thy breast to vulgar eyes?
And canst thou show the wounds that rankle there?
Methought in noble hearts that sorrow lies
Too deep to suffer coarser minds to share.

"The wounds inflicted by the hand we love,
(The hand that should have warded off each blow,)
Are never heal'd, as aching hearts can prove,
But *sacred* should the stream of sorrow flow.

"If *friendship's* pity quells not real grief,
Can *public* pity soothe thy woes to sleep?—
No! Byron, spurn such vain, such weak relief,
And if thy tears must fall—in secret weep."

He never appeared to so little advantage as when he talked sentiment: this did not at all strike me at first; on the contrary, it excited a powerful interest for him; but when he had vented his spleen in sarcasms, and pointed ridicule on sentiment, reducing all that is noblest in our natures to the level of common every-day life, the charm was broken, and it was impossible to sympathize with him again. He observed something of this, and seemed dissatisfied and restless when he perceived that he could no longer excite either strong sympathy or astonishment. Notwithstanding all these contradictions in this wayward, spoiled child of genius, the impression left on my mind was, that he had both sentiment and romance in his nature; but that, from the love of displaying his wit and astonishing his hearers, he affected to despise and ridicule them.

CHAPTER III.

Daily rides—Clever people great talkers—The fatigue of literary occupation—A lady's album—Moore and the critic—Fashionable life in London as it appeared to Byron—English country life—*Les dames à la mode*—English and French idiosyncrasies—The village of Nervi—Byron on horseback—Peculiarities of his riding-costume and his horse's caparison—Byron's horror of necrologists—Friendless poets—Byron as literary critic—Sir Walter Scott, author and man—Byron's appreciation of his works—Cervantes surpassed by Scott—Byron at his best—His acute observation—Italian moonlight—Genoese sailors—"God save the King" in a foreign land—The Stoic philosopher—The Countess Guiccioli—The Counts Gamba—"Don Juan"—Hope's "Anastasius"—Galt's novels and Wilkie's pictures—The genius of Mrs. Hemans—Byron's dislike for the Lake school of poets—Keats.

From this period we saw Lord Byron frequently; he met us in our rides nearly every day, and the road to Nervi became our favourite promenade. While riding by the sea-shore, he often recurred to the events of his life, mingling sarcasms on himself with bitter pleasantries against others. He dined often with us, and sometimes came after dinner, as he complained that he suffered from indulging at our repasts,

as animal food disagreed with him. He added, that even the excitement of society, though agreeable and exhilarating at the time, left a nervous irritation, which prevented sleep or occupation for many hours afterwards.

I once spoke to him, by the desire of his medical adviser, on the necessity of his accustoming himself to a more nutritious regimen; but he declared, that if he did, he should get fat and stupid, and that he felt it was only by abstinence that he had the power of exercising his mind. He complained of being spoiled for society, by having so long lived out of it; and said, that though naturally of a quick apprehension, he latterly felt himself dull and stupid. The impression left on my mind is, that Byron never could have been a brilliant person in society, and that he was not formed for what generally is understood by that term: he has none of the "small change" that passes current in the mart of society; his gold is in ingots, and cannot be brought into use for trifling expenditures; he, however, talks a good deal, and likes to *raconter*.

Speaking of people who were great talkers, he said that almost all clever people were such, and gave several examples: amongst others, he cited Voltaire, Horace Walpole, Johnson, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Madame de Staël. "But," said

he, "my friend, Lady ——, would have talked them all out of the field. She, I suppose, has heard that all clever people are great talkers, and so has determined on displaying at least *one* attribute of that genus; but her ladyship would do well to recollect that *all* great talkers are not clever people—a truism that no one can doubt who has been often in her society.

"Lady ——," continued Byron, "with *beaucoup de ridicule*, has many essentially fine qualities; she is independent in her principles — though, by-the-bye, like all Independents, she allows that privilege to few others, being the veriest tyrant that ever governed Fashion's fools, who are compelled to shake their caps and bells as she wills it. Of all that *coterie*," said Byron, "Madame de ——, after Lady ——, was the best; at least I thought so, for these two ladies were the only ones who ventured to protect me when all London was crying out against me on the separation, and *they* behaved courageously and kindly; indeed, Madame de —— defended me when few dared to do so, and I have always remembered it. Poor dear Lady ——! does she still retain her beautiful cream-coloured complexion and raven hair? I used to long to tell her that she spoiled her looks by her excessive animation; for eyes, tongue, head, and arms were all in movement at once, and were only relieved

from their active service by want of respiration. I shall never forget when she once complained to me of the fatigue of literary occupations, and I in terror expected her ladyship to propose reading to me an epic poem, tragedy, or at least a novel of her composition, when lo! she displayed to me a very richly-bound album, half filled with printed extracts cut out of newspapers and magazines, which she had selected and pasted in the book; and I (happy at being let off so easily) sincerely agreed with her that literature was very tiresome. I understand that she has now advanced with the 'march of intellect,' and got an album filled with MS. poetry, to which all of us of the *craft* have contributed. I was the first; Moore wrote something, which was, like all that he writes, very sparkling and terse; but he got dissatisfied with the faint praise it met with from the husband before Miladi saw the verses, and destroyed the effusion: I know not if he ever has supplied their place. Can you fancy Moore paying attention to the opinion of Milor on poesy? Had it been on racing or horse-flesh he might have been right; but Pegasus is, perhaps, the only horse of whose paces Lord —— could not be a judge."

Talking of fashionable life in London, Lord Byron said that there was nothing so vapid and *ennuyeux*. "The English," said he, "were in-

tended by nature to be good, sober-minded people, and those who live in the country are really admirable. I saw a good deal of English country life, and it is the only favourable impression that remains of our mode of living; but of London and *exclusive* society I retain a fearful recollection. Dissipation has need of wit, talent, and gaiety to prevent reflection, and make the eternal round of frivolous amusements pass; and of these," continued Byron, "there was a terrible lack in the society in which I mixed. The minds of the English are formed of sterner stuff. You may make an English woman (indeed, Nature does this) the best daughter, wife, and mother in the world—nay, you may make her a heroine; but nothing can make her a genuine *woman of fashion!* And yet this latter *rôle* is the one which, *par préférence*, she always wishes to act.

"Thorough-bred English gentlewomen," said Byron, "are the most distinguished and lady-like creatures imaginable. Natural, mild, and dignified, they are formed to be placed at the heads of our patrician establishments; but when they quit their congenial spheres to enact the leaders of fashion, *les dames à la mode*, they bungle sadly; their gaiety degenerates into levity, their hauteur into incivility, their fashionable ease and nonchalance into *brusquerie*, and their attempts at

assuming *les usages du monde* into a positive outrage on all the *bienséances*. In short, they offer a coarse caricature of the airy flightiness and capricious, but amusing, *légèreté* of the French, without any of their redeeming *espièglerie* and *politesse*. And all this because they will perform parts in the comedy of life for which nature has not formed them, neglecting their own dignified characters.

"Madame de Staël," continued Lord Byron, "was forcibly struck by the factitious tone of the best society in London, and wished very much to have an opportunity of judging of that of the second class. She, however, had not this opportunity, which I regret, as I think it would have justified her expectations. In England the raw material is generally good ; it is the over-dressing that injures it ; and as the class she wished to study are well educated, and have all the refinement of civilization without its corruption, she would have carried away a favourable impression. Lord Grey and his family were the personification of her *beau idéal* of perfection, as I must say they are of mine," continued Byron, "and might serve as the finest specimens of the pure English patrician breed, of which so few remain. *His* uncompromising and uncompromised dignity, founded on self-respect, and accompanied by that certain proof of superiority—simplicity of manner

and freedom from affectation, with *her* mild and matron graces, her whole life offering a model to wives and mothers—really they are people to be proud of, and a few such would reconcile one to one's species."

One of our first rides with Lord Byron was to Nervi, a village on the sea-coast, most romantically situated, and each turn of the road presenting various and beautiful prospects. They were all familiar to him, and he failed not to point them out, but in very sober terms, never allowing anything like enthusiasm in his expressions, though many of the views might have excited it.

His appearance on horseback was not advantageous, and he seemed aware of it, for he made many excuses for his dress and equestrian appointments. His horse was literally covered with various trappings, in the way of cavesons, martingales, and Heaven knows how many other (to me) unknown inventions. The saddle was *à la hussarde* with holsters, in which he always carried pistols. His dress consisted of a nankeen jacket and trousers, which appeared to have shrunk from washing; the jacket embroidered in the same colour, and with three rows of buttons; the waist very short, the back very narrow, and the sleeves set in as they used to be ten or fifteen years before; a black stock, very narrow; a dark-blue velvet cap with a shade, and a very

rich gold band and large gold tassel at the crown; nankeen gaiters and a pair of blue spectacles completed his costume, which was anything but becoming. This was his general dress of a morning for riding, but I have seen it changed for a green tartan plaid jacket.

He did not ride well, which surprised us, as, from the frequent allusions to horsemanship in his works, we expected to find him almost a Nimrod. It was evident that he had *pretensions* on this point, though he certainly was what I should call a timid rider. When his horse made a false step, which was not unfrequent, he seemed discomposed; and when we came to any bad part of the road he immediately checked his course and walked his horse very slowly, though there really was nothing to make even a lady nervous. Finding that I could perfectly manage (or what he called *bully*) a very highly-dressed horse that I daily rode, he became extremely anxious to buy it; asked me a thousand questions as to how I had acquired such a perfect command of it, etc., etc., and entreated as the greatest favour that I would resign it to him as a charger to take to Greece, declaring he never would part with it, etc. As I was by no means a bold rider, we were rather amused at observing Lord Byron's opinion of my courage; and as he seemed so anxious for the horse, I agreed to let him have it

when he was to embark. From this time he paid particular attention to the movements of poor Mameluke (the name of the horse), and said he should now feel confidence in action with so steady a charger.

During our ride the conversation turned on our mutual friends and acquaintances in England. Talking of two of them, for one of whom he professed a great regard, he declared laughingly that they had saved him from suicide. Seeing me look grave, he added, "It is a fact, I assure you: I should positively have destroyed myself, but I guessed that —— or —— would write my life, and with this fear before my eyes I have lived on. I know so well the sort of things they would write of me—the excuses, lame as myself, that they would offer for my delinquencies, while they were unnecessarily exposing them; and all this done with the avowed intention of justifying what—God help me!—cannot be justified, my *unpoetical* reputation, with which the world can have nothing to do. One of my friends would dip his pen in clarified honey, and the other in vinegar, to describe my manifold transgressions; and as I do not wish my poor fame to be either *preserved* or *pickled*, I have lived on and written my Memoirs, where facts will speak for themselves, without the editorial candour of excuses, such as, 'We cannot excuse *this* unhappy error,

or defend *that* impropriety!'—the mode," continued Byron, "in which friends exalt their own prudence and virtue, by exhibiting the want of those qualities in the dear departed, and by marking their disapproval of his errors. I have written my Memoirs," said Byron, "to save the necessity of their being written by a friend or friends, and have only to hope they will not add notes."

I remarked, with a smile, that at all events he anticipated his friends by *saying* beforehand as many ill-natured things of *them* as they could possibly *write* of *him*. He laughed, and said, "Depend on it we are equal. Poets (and I may, I suppose, without presumption, count myself among that favoured race, as it has pleased the Fates to make me one,) have no friends. On the old principle, that 'union gives force,' we sometimes agree to have a violent friendship for each other. We dedicate, we bepraise, we write pretty letters, but we do not deceive *each other*. In short, we resemble you fair ladies, when some half dozen of the fairest of you p ofess to love each other mightily, correspond so sweetly, call each other by such pretty epithets, and laugh in your hearts at those who are taken in by such appearances."

I endeavoured to defend my sex, but he adhered to his opinion. I ought to add that

during this conversation he was very gay, and that though his words may appear severe, there was no severity in his manner. The natural flippancy of Lord Byron took off all appearance of premeditation or bitterness from his remarks, even when they were acrimonious, and the impression conveyed to, and left on my mind was, that for the most part they were uttered more in jest than in earnest. They were, however, sufficiently severe to make me feel that there was no safety with him, and that in five minutes after one's quitting him on terms of friendship, he could not resist the temptation of showing one up, either in conversation or by letter, though in another half-hour he would put himself to personal inconvenience to render a kindness to the person so shown up.

I remarked, that in talking of literary productions, he seemed much more susceptible to their defects, than alive to their beauties. As a proof, he never failed to remember some quotation that told against the unhappy author, which he recited with an emphasis, or a mock-heroic air, that made it very ludicrous. The pathetic he always burlesqued in reciting; but this I am sure proceeded from an affectation of not sympathizing with the general taste.

April —. Lord Byron dined with us to-day. During dinner he was as usual gay, spoke in

terms of the warmest commendation of Sir Walter Scott, not only as an author, but as a man, and dwelt with apparent delight on his novels, declaring that he had read and re-read them over and over again, and always with increased pleasure. He said that he quite equalled, nay, in his opinion surpassed, Cervantes. In talking of Sir Walter's private character, goodness of heart, etc., Lord Byron became more animated than I had ever seen him; his colour changed from its general pallid tint to a more lively hue, and his eyes became humid; never had he appeared to such advantage, and it might easily be seen that every expression he uttered proceeded from his heart. Poor Byron!—for poor he is even with all his genius, rank, and wealth—had he lived more with men like Scott, whose openness of character and steady principle had convinced him that they were in earnest in *their goodness*, and not *making believe*, (as he always suspects good people to be,) his life might be different and happier.

Byron is so acute an observer that nothing escapes him; all the shades of selfishness and vanity are exposed to his searching glance, and the misfortune is (and a serious one it is to him) that when he finds these, and alas! they are to be found on every side, they disgust and prevent his giving credit to the many good qualities that

often accompany them. He declares he can sooner pardon crimes, because they proceed from the passions, than these minor vices, which spring from selfishness and self-conceit. We had a long argument this evening on the subject, which ended, like most arguments, by leaving both of the same opinion as when it commenced. I endeavoured to prove that crimes were not only injurious to the perpetrators, but often ruinous to the innocent, and productive of misery to friends and relations, whereas selfishness and vanity carried with them their own punishment, the first depriving the person of all sympathy, and the second exposing him to ridicule, which to the vain is a heavy punishment, but that their effects were not destructive to society as are crimes.

He laughed when I told him that, having heard him so often declaim against vanity, and detect it so often in his friends, I began to suspect he knew the malady by having had it himself, and that I had observed through life that those persons who had the most vanity were the most severe against that failing in their friends. He wished to impress upon me that he was not vain, and gave various proofs to establish this ; but I produced against him his boasts of swimming, his evident desire of being considered more *un homme de société* than a poet, and other little examples, when he laughingly pleaded guilty,

and promised to be more merciful towards his friends.

After tea we sat on the balcony : it commands a fine view, and we had one of those moonlight nights that are seen only in this country. Every object was tinged with its silvery lustre. In front were crowded an uncountable number of ships from every country, with their various flags waving in the breeze, which bore to us the sounds of the as various languages of the crews. In the distance we enjoyed a more expanded view of the sea, which reminded Byron of his friend Moore's description, which he quoted :

"The sea is like a silv'ry lake."

The *fanale* (lighthouse) casting its golden blaze into this silvery lake, and throwing a red lurid reflection on the sails of the vessels that passed near it; the fishermen, with their small boats, each having a fire held in a sort of grate fastened at the bow of the boat, which burns brilliantly, and by which they not only see the fish that approach, but attract them; their scarlet caps, which all the Genoese sailors and fishermen wear, adding much to their picturesque appearance, all formed a picture that description falls far short of; and when to this are joined the bland odours of the richest and rarest flowers, with which the balconies are filled, one feels that such nights are

never to be forgotten, and while the senses dwell on each, and all, a delicious melancholy steals over the mind, as it reflects that, the destinies of each conducting to far distant regions, a time will arrive when all now before the eye will appear but as a dream.

This was felt by all the party; and after a silence of many minutes, it was broken by Byron, who remarked, "What an evening, and what a view! Should we ever meet in the dense atmosphere of London, shall we not recall this evening, and the scenery now before us? but, no! most probably *there* we should not feel as we do here; we should fall into the same heartless, loveless apathy that distinguishes one half of our dear compatriots, or the bustling, impertinent importance to be considered *supreme bon ton* that marks the other."

Byron spoke with bitterness, but it was the bitterness of a fine nature soured by having been touched too closely by those who had lost their better feelings through contact with the world. After a few minutes' silence, he said, "Look at that forest of masts now before us! from what remote parts of the world do they come; o'er how many waves have they not passed, and how many tempests have they not been, and may again be exposed to! how many hearts and tender thoughts follow them! mothers, wives, sisters,

and sweethearts, who perhaps at this hour are offering up prayers for their safety."

While he was yet speaking, sounds of vocal music arose; national hymns and barcaroles were sung in turns by the different crews, and when they had ceased, "God save the King" was sung by the crews of some English merchantmen lying close to the pier. This was a surprise to us all, and its effect on our feelings was magnetic. Byron was no less touched than the rest; each felt at the moment that tie of country which unites all when they meet on a far distant shore. When the song ceased, Byron, with a melancholy smile, observed, "Why, positively, we are all quite sentimental this evening, and *I*—*I* who have sworn against sentimentality, find the old leaven still in my nature, and quite ready to make a fool of me. 'Tell it not in Gath'—that is to say, breathe it not in London, or to English ears polite, or never again shall I be able to *enact* the stoic philosopher. Come, come; this will never do. We must forswear moonlight, fine views, and above all, hearing a national air sung. Little does his gracious Majesty Big Ben, as Moore calls him, imagine what loyal subjects he has at Genoa, and least of all that I am among their number."

Byron attempted to be gay, but the effort was not successful, and he wished us good-night with

a trepidation of manner that marked his feelings. And this is the man that I have heard considered unfeeling! How often are our best qualities turned against us, and made the instruments for wounding us in the most vulnerable part, until, ashamed of betraying our susceptibility, we affect an insensibility we are far from possessing, and, while we deceive others, nourish in secret the feelings that prey *only* on our own hearts!

It is difficult to judge when Lord Byron is serious or not. He has a habit of mystifying, that might impose upon many, but that can be detected by examining his physiognomy; for a sort of mock gravity, now and then broken by a malicious smile, betrays when he is speaking for effect, and not giving utterance to his real sentiments. If he sees that he is detected, he appears angry for a moment, and then laughingly admits that it amuses him to *hoax* people, as he calls it, and that when each person, at some future day, will give their different statements of him, they will be so contradictory that *all* will be doubted—an idea that gratifies him exceedingly!

The mobility of his nature is extraordinary, and makes him inconsistent in his actions as well as in his conversation. He introduced the subject of the Countess Guiccioli and her family, which we, of course, would not have touched on. He

stated that they lived beneath his roof because his rank as a British peer afforded her father and brother protection, they having been banished from Ravenna, their native place, on account of their politics. He spoke in high terms of the Counts Gamba, father and son; he said that he had given the family a wing of his house, but that their establishments were totally separate, their repasts never taken together, and that such was their scrupulous delicacy, that they never would accept a pecuniary obligation from him in all the difficulties entailed on them by their exile.

He represented the Countess Guiccioli as a most amiable and lady-like person, perfectly disinterested and noble-minded, devotedly attached to him, and possessing so many high and estimable qualities as to offer an excuse for any man's attachment to her. He said that he had been passionately in love with her, and that she had sacrificed everything for him; that the whole of her conduct towards him had been admirable, and that not only did he feel the strongest personal attachment to her, but the highest sentiments of esteem. He dwelt with evident complacency on her noble birth and distinguished connections —advantages to which he attaches great importance. I never met anyone with so decided a taste for aristocracy as Lord Byron, and this is shown in a thousand different ways.

He says the Countess is well educated, remarkably fond of, and well read in, the poetry of her own country, and a tolerable proficient in that of France and England. In his praises of the Countess Guiccioli, it is quite evident that he is sincere, and I am persuaded this is his last attachment. He told me that she had used every effort to get him to discontinue "Don Juan," or at least to preserve the future cantos from all impure passages. In short, he has said all that was possible to impress me with a favourable opinion of this lady, and has convinced me that he entertains a very high one of her himself.

Byron is a strange *mélange* of good and evil, the predominancy of either depending wholly on the humour he may happen to be in. His is a character that Nature totally unfitted for domestic habits, or for rendering a woman of refinement or susceptibility happy. He confesses to me that he is not happy, but admits that it is his own fault, as the Countess Guiccioli, the only object of his love, has all the qualities to render a reasonable being happy. I observed, *apropos* to some observation he had made, that I feared the Countess Guiccioli had little reason to be satisfied with her lot. He answered: "Perhaps you are right, yet she must know that I am sincerely attached to her; but the truth is, my

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habits are not those requisite to form the happiness of any woman. I am worn out in feelings, for, though only thirty-six, I feel sixty in mind, and am less capable than ever of those nameless attentions that all women, but, above all, Italian women, require. I like solitude, which has become absolutely necessary to me; am fond of shutting myself up for hours, and, when with the person I like, am often *distrait* and gloomy.

"There is something, I am convinced (continued Byron), in the poetical temperament that precludes happiness, not only to the person who has it, but to those connected with him. Do not accuse me of vanity because I say this, as my belief is that the worst poet may share this misfortune in common with the best. The way in which I account for it is, that our *imaginations* being warmer than our *hearts*, and much more given to wander, the latter have not the power to control the former; hence, soon after our passions are gratified, imagination again takes wing, and, finding the insufficiency of actual indulgence beyond the moment, abandons itself to all its wayward fancies, and during this abandonment becomes cold and insensible to the demands of affection. This is our misfortune, but not our fault, and dearly do we expiate it; by it we are rendered incapable of sympathy, and cannot lighten, by sharing, the pain we inflict. Thus

we witness, without the power of alleviating, the anxiety and dissatisfaction our conduct occasions.

"We are not so totally unfeeling as not to be grieved at the unhappiness we cause; but this same power of imagination transports our thoughts to other scenes, and we are always so much more occupied by the ideal than the present that we forget all that is actual. It is as though the creatures of another sphere, not subject to the lot of mortality, formed a factitious alliance (as all alliances must be that are not in all respects equal) with the creatures of this earth, and, being exempt from its sufferings, turned their thoughts to brighter regions, leaving the partners of their earthly existence to suffer alone. But let the object of affection be snatched away by death, and how is all the pain ever inflicted on them avenged! The same imagination that led us to slight, or overlook their sufferings, now that they are for ever lost to us, magnifies their estimable qualities, and increases tenfold the affection we ever felt for them:

"'Oh! what are thousand living loves,
To that which cannot quit the dead?'

How did I feel this when Allegra, my daughter, died! While she lived, her existence never seemed necessary to my happiness; but no sooner did I lose her than it appeared to me as if I

could not live without her. Even now the recollection is most bitter; but how much more severely would the death of Teresa afflict me with the dreadful consciousness that while I had been soaring into the fields of romance and fancy I had left her to weep over my coldness or infidelities of imagination. It is a dreadful proof of the weakness of our natures that we cannot control ourselves sufficiently to form the happiness of those we love, or to bear their loss without agony."

The whole of this conversation made a deep impression on my mind, and the countenance of the speaker, full of earnestness and feeling, impressed it still more strongly on my memory. Byron is right; a brilliant imagination is rarely, if ever, accompanied by a warm heart; but on this latter depends the happiness of life; the other renders us dissatisfied with its ordinary enjoyments.

He is an extraordinary person, *indiscreet* to a degree that is surprising, exposing his own feelings, and entering into details of those of others, that ought to be sacred, with a degree of frankness as unnecessary as it is rare. Incontinence of speech is his besetting sin. He is, I am persuaded, incapable of keeping any secret, however it may concern his own honour or that of another; and the first person with whom he found himself

tête-à-tête would be made the confidant without any reference to his worthiness of the confidence or not. This indiscretion proceeds not from malice, but, I should say, from want of delicacy of mind. To this was owing the publication of his "Farewell," addressed to Lady Byron—a farewell that must have lost all effect as an appeal to her feelings the moment it was exposed to the public—nay, must have offended her delicacy.

Byron spoke to-day in terms of high commendation of Hope's "Anastasius;" said that he wept bitterly over many pages of it, and for two reasons—first, that *he* had not written it, and secondly, that *Hope* had; for that it was necessary to like a man excessively to pardon his writing such a book—a book, as he said, excelling all recent productions, as much in wit and talent, as in true pathos. He added, that he would have given his two most approved poems to have been the author of "Anastasius."*

* Thomas Hope—born about 1770; died February 3rd, 1831—was a wealthy man who collected works of art and patronized artists. He wrote works on house-furnishing and decoration, and on the costume of the ancients and the moderns. His romance, entitled "Anastasius; or, Memoirs of a Greek Writer at the Close of the Eighteenth Century," appeared anonymously in 1819. It was attributed to Byron, and Hope claimed the authorship. Two books from his pen appeared after his death, the one being "An Essay on the Origin and Prospects of Man," the other "An Historical Essay on Architecture."

From "Anastasius" he wandered to the works of Mr. Galt, praised the "Annals of the Parish" very highly, as also "The Entail," which we had lent him, and some scenes of which he said had affected him very much. "The characters in Mr. Galt's novels have an identity," added Byron, "that reminds me of Wilkie's pictures."

As a woman, I felt proud of the homage he paid to the genius of Mrs. Hemans, and as a passionate admirer of her poetry, I felt flattered, at finding that Lord Byron fully sympathized with my admiration. He has, or at least expresses, a strong dislike to the Lake school of poets, never mentions them except in ridicule, and he and I nearly quarrelled to-day because I defended poor Keats.

CHAPTER IV.

On the balcony—Shelley—Byron's eulogy on him—Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley—Leigh Hunt—A journalistic venture, "The Liberal"—Absent friends—Hobhouse—Lines written on hearing of Lady Byron's illness—Byron's will—Sir Francis Burdett—An *unpartial* friend—The pride of aristocracy—"George Rose to George Byron"—Ravenna—Count Vittorio Alfieri—Mistaken identity—Anonymous letters—A stranger's prayer—"The beauty of holiness"—Lady Cowper—Lady Adelaide Forbes.

On looking out from the balcony this morning with Byron, I observed his countenance change, and an expression of deep sadness steal over it. After a few minutes' silence he pointed out to me a boat anchored to the right, as the one in which his friend Shelley went down, and he said the sight of it made him ill. "You should have known Shelley," said Byron, "to feel how much I must regret him. He was the most gentle, most amiable, and *least* worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius, joined to a simplicity, as rare as is it admirable. He had formed to himself a *beau*

idéal of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter. He had a most brilliant imagination, but a total want of worldly-wisdom. I have seen nothing like him, and never shall again, I am certain. I never can forget the night that his poor wife rushed into my room at Pisa, with a face pale as marble, and terror impressed on her brow, demanding, with all the tragic impetuosity of grief and alarm, where was her husband! Vain were all our efforts to calm her; a desperate sort of courage seemed to give her energy to confront the horrible truth that awaited her; it was the courage of despair. I have seen nothing in tragedy on the stage so powerful, or so affecting, as her appearance, and it often presents itself to my memory. I knew nothing then of the catastrophe, but the vividness of her terror communicated itself to me, and I feared the worst, which fears were, alas! too soon fearfully realized.

"Mrs. Shelley is very clever—indeed, it would be difficult for her not to be so; the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin, and the wife of Shelley, could be no common person."*

Byron talked to-day of Leigh Hunt, regretted

* Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley—born August 30th, 1797; died February 21st, 1851—was Shelley's second wife. She wrote several readable books, the one by which she is best known being that continuing the weird story called "Frankenstein."

his ever having embarked in "The Liberal," and said that it had drawn a nest of hornets on him; but expressed a very good opinion of the talents and principle of Mr. Hunt, though, as he said, "our tastes are so opposite, that we are totally unsuited to each other. He admires the Lakers, I abhor them; in short, we are more formed to be friends at a distance, than near." I can perceive that he wishes Mr. Hunt and his family away. It appears to me that Byron is a person who, without reflection, would form engagements which, when condemned by his friends or advisers, he would gladly get out of without considering the means, or, at least, without reflecting on the humiliation such a desertion must inflict on the persons he had associated with him. He gives me the idea of a man, who, feeling himself in such a dilemma, would become cold and ungracious to the parties with whom he so stood, before he had mental courage sufficient to abandon them. I may be wrong, but the whole of his manner of talking of Mr. Hunt gives me this impression, though he has not said what might be called an unkind word of him.

Much as Byron has braved public opinion, it is evident he has a great deference for those who stand high in it, and that he is shy in attaching himself publicly to persons who have even, however undeservedly, fallen under its censure. His

expressed contempt and defiance of the world reminds me of the bravadoes of children, who, afraid of darkness, make a noise to give themselves courage to support what they dread. It is very evident that he is partial to aristocratic friends; he dwells with complacency on the advantages of rank and station, and has more than once boasted that people of family are always to be recognised by a *certain air*, and the smallness and delicacy of their hands.

He talked in terms of high commendation of the talents and acquirements of Mr. Hobhouse; but a latent sentiment of pique was visible in his manner, from the idea he appeared to entertain that Mr. Hobhouse had undervalued him. Byron evidently likes praise: this is a weakness, if weakness it be, that he partakes in common with mankind in general; but he does not seem aware that a great compliment is implied in the very act of telling a man his faults—for the friend who undertakes this disagreeable office must give him whom he censures credit for many good qualities, as well as no ordinary portion of candour and temper, to suppose him capable of hearing their recapitulation of his failings. Byron is, after all, a spoiled child, and, the severe lessons he has met with being disproportioned to the errors that called them forth, has made him view the faults of the civilized world through a false medium; a

sort of discoloured magnifying-glass, while his own are gazed at through a concave lens. All that Byron has told me of the frankness and unbending honesty of Mr. Hobhouse's character has given me a most favourable impression of that gentleman.

Byron gave me to-day a MS. copy of verses, addressed to Lady Byron, on reading in a newspaper that she had been ill. How different is the feeling that pervades them from that of the letter addressed to her which he has given me! a lurking tenderness, suppressed by a pride that was doubtful of the reception it might meet, is evident in one, while bitterness, uncompromising bitterness, marks the other. Neither was written but with deep feelings of pain, and should be judged as the outpourings of a wounded spirit, demanding pity more than anger. I subjoin the verses, though not without some reluctance. But while to the public they are of such value that any reasons for their suppression ought to be extremely strong, so, on the other hand, I trust, they cannot hurt either the feelings of her to whom they are addressed, or the memory of him by whom they are written :—to her, because the very bitterness of reproach proves that unconquerable affection which cannot but heal the wound it causes ; to him, because who, in the shattered feelings they betray, will not acknow-

ledge the grief that hurries into error, and (may we add in charity !) atones for it ?

"LINES ON HEARING THAT LADY BYRON WAS ILL.

"And thou wert sad—yet I was not with thee ;
And thou wert sick, and yet I was not near ;
Methought that joy and health alone could be
Where I was not—and pain and sorrow here !
And is it thus ?—it is as I foretold,
And shall be more so ; for the mind recoils
Upon itself, and the wreck'd heart lies cold,
While heaviness collects the shatter'd spoils.
It is not in the storm nor in the strife
We feel benumb'd, and wish to be no more,
But in the after-silence on the shore,
When all is lost, except a little life.

"I am too well avenged !—but 'twas my right ;
Whate'er my sins might be, *thou* wert not sent
To be the Nemesis who should requite—
Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.

"Mercy is for the merciful !—if thou
Hast been of such, 'twill be accorded now.
Thy nights are banish'd from the realms of sleep !—
Yes ! they may flatter thee, but thou shalt feel
A hollow agony which will not heal,
For thou art pillow'd on a curse too deep ;
Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap
The bitter harvest in a woe as real !
I have had many foes, but none like thee ;
For 'gainst the rest myself I could defend,
And be avenged, or turn them into friend ;
But thou in safe implacability
Hadst nought to dread—in thy own weakness shielded,
And in my love, which hath but too much yielded,
And spared, for thy sake, some I should not spare—

And thus upon the world—trust in thy truth—
And the wild fame of my ungovern'd youth—
On things that were not, and on things that are—
Even upon such a basis hast thou built
A monument, whose cement hath been guilt!
The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord,
And hew'd down, with an unsuspected sword,
Fame, peace, and hope—and all the better life
Which, but for this cold treason of thy heart,
Might still have risen from out the grave of strife,
And found a nobler duty than to part.
But of thy virtues didst thou make a vice,
Trafficking with them in a purpose cold,
For present anger, and for future gold—
And buying other's grief at any price.
And thus once enter'd into crooked ways,
The early Truth, which was thy proper praise,
Did not still walk beside thee—but at times,
And with a breast unknowing its own crimes,
Deceit, averments incompatible,
Equivocations, and the thoughts which dwell
In Janus-spirits—the significant eye
Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext
Of Prudence, with advantages annex'd—
The acquiescence in all things which tend,
No matter how, to the desired end—
All found a place in thy philosophy.
The means were worthy, and the end is won—
I would not do by thee as thou hast done!"

It is evident that Lady Byron occupies his attention continually; he introduces her name frequently; is fond of recurring to the brief period of their living together; dwells with complacency on her personal attractions, saying, that though not regularly handsome, he liked her

looks. He is very inquisitive about her; was much disappointed that I had never seen her, nor could give any account of her appearance at present. In short, a thousand indescribable circumstances have left the impression on my mind that she occupies much of his thoughts, and that they appear to revert continually to her and his child. He owned to me, that when he reflected on the whole tenour of her conduct—the refusing any explanation—never answering his letters, nor holding out even a hope that in future years their child might form a bond of union between them, he felt exasperated against her, and vented this feeling in his writings; nay, more, he blushed for his own weakness in thinking so often and so kindly of one who certainly showed no symptom of ever bestowing a thought on him. The mystery attached to Lady Byron's silence has piqued him, and kept alive an interest that, even now, appears as lively as if their separation was recent. There is something so humiliating in the consciousness that some dear object, to whom we thought ourselves necessary, and who occupies much of our thoughts, can forget that we exist, or at least act as if she did so, that I can well excuse the bitterness of poor Byron's feelings on this point, though not the published sarcasms caused by this bitterness; and whatever may be the sufferings of Lady Byron, they are more than avenged by what her husband feels.

It appears to me extraordinary, that a person who has given such interesting sketches of the female character as Byron has in his works, should be so little *au fait* of judging feminine feeling under certain circumstances. He is surprised that Lady Byron has never relented since his absence from England; but he forgets how that absence has been filled up on his part. I ventured to suggest this, and hinted that, perhaps, had his conduct been irreproachable during the first years of their separation, and unstained by any attachment that could have widened the breach between them, it is possible that Lady Byron might have become reconciled to him; but that no woman of delicacy could receive or answer letters written beneath the same roof that sheltered some female favourite, whose presence alone proved that the husband could not have those feelings of propriety or affection towards his absent wife, the want of which constitutes a crime that all *women*, at least, can understand to be one of those least pardonable.

How few men understand the feelings of women! Sensitive, and easily wounded as we are, obliged to call up pride to support us in trials that always leave fearful marks behind, how often are we compelled to assume the semblance of coldness and indifference when the heart inly bleeds; and the decent composure, put

on with our visiting garments to appear in public, and, like them, worn for a few hours, is with them laid aside; and all the dreariness, the heart-consuming cares, that women alone can know, return to make us feel, that though we may disguise our sufferings from others, and deck our countenance with smiles, we cannot deceive ourselves, and are but the more miserable from the constraint we submit to! A woman only can understand a woman's heart—we cannot, dare not, complain—sympathy is denied us, because we must not lay open the wounds that excite it; and even the most legitimate feelings are too sacred in female estimation to be exposed—thus while we nurse the grief "that lies too deep for tears," and consumes alike health and peace, a man may with impunity express all, nay, more than he feels—court and meet sympathy, while his leisure hours are cheered by occupations and pleasures, the latter too often such as ought to prove how little he stood in need of compassion, except for his vices.

I stated something of this to Lord Byron to-day, *apropos* to the difference between his position and that of his wife. He tried to prove to me how much more painful was his situation than hers; but I effected some alteration in his opinion when I had fairly placed their relative positions before him—at least such as they appeared to

me. I represented Lady Byron to him separating in early youth, whether from just or mistaken motives for such a step, from the husband of her choice, after little more than a brief year's union, and immediately after that union had been cemented by the endearing, strengthening tie of a new-born infant; carrying with her into solitude this fond and powerful remembrancer of its father, how much must it have cost her to resist the appeals of such a pleader!—wearing away her youth in almost monastic seclusion, her motives questioned by some, and appreciated by few—seeking consolation alone in the discharge of her duties, and avoiding all external demonstrations of a grief that her pale cheek and solitary existence are such powerful vouchers for! Such is the portrait I gave him of Lady Byron—his own I ventured to sketch as follows.

I did not enter into the causes, or motives, of the separation, because I know them not, but I dwelt on his subsequent conduct: the appealing on the separation to public sympathy, by the publication of verses which ought only to have met the eye of her to whom they were addressed, was in itself an outrage to that delicacy, that shrinks from, and shuns publicity, so inherent in the female heart. He leaves England—the climate, modes, and customs of which had never been congenial to his taste—to seek beneath the

sunny skies of Italy, and among all the soul-exciting objects that classic land can offer, a consolation for domestic disappointment. How soon were the broken ties of conjugal affection replaced by less holy ones! I refer not to his attachment to the Countess Guiccioli, because at least it is of a different and a more pure nature, but to those degrading *liaisons* which marked the first year or two of his residence in Italy, and must ever from their revolting coarseness remain a stain on his fame. It may be urged that disappointment and sorrow drove him into such excesses; but admitting this, surely we must respect the grief that is borne in solitude, and with the most irreproachable delicacy of conduct, more than that which flies to gross sensualities for relief.

Such was the substance and, I believe, nearly the words I repeated to him to-day; and it is but justice to him to say that they seemed to make a deep impression. He said that if my portrait of Lady Byron's position was indeed a faithful one, she was much more to be pitied than he; that he felt deeply for her, but that he had never viewed their relative situations in the same light before; he had always considered her as governed wholly by pride.

I urged that my statement was drawn from facts; that, of the extreme privacy and seclusion

of her life ever since the separation, there could be no doubt, and this alone vouched for the feelings that led to it.

He seemed pleased and gratified by the reflections I had made, insensibly fell into a tone of tenderness in speaking of Lady Byron, and pressed my hand with more than usual cordiality. On bidding me good-bye, his parting words were, "You probe old and half-healed wounds, but though you give pain, you excite a more healthy action and do good."

His heart yearns to see his child; all children of the same age remind him of her, and he loves to recur to the subject.

Poor Byron has hitherto been so continually occupied with dwelling on and analyzing his own feelings, that he has not reflected on those of his wife. He cannot understand her observing such a total silence on their position, because he could not and cannot resist making it the topic of conversation with even chance associates: this, which an impartial observer of her conduct would attribute to deep feelings, and a sense of delicacy, he concludes to be caused by pride and want of feeling. We are always prone to judge of others by ourselves, which is one of the reasons why our judgments are in general so erroneous. Man may be judged by his species *en masse*, but he who would judge of mankind in the aggregate,

from one specimen of the genus, must be often in error, and this is Byron's case.

Lord Byron told me to-day that he had been occupied in the morning making his will; that he had left the bulk of his fortune to his sister, as, his daughter having in right of her mother a large fortune, he thought it unnecessary to increase it; he added that he had left the Countess Guiccioli £10,000, and had intended to have left her £25,000; but that she had suspected his intentions, and urged him so strongly not to do so, or indeed to leave her anything, that he had changed the sum to £10,000. He said that this was one of innumerable instances of her delicacy and disinterestedness, of which he had repeated proofs; that she was so fearful of the possibility of having interested motives attributed to her, that he was certain she would prefer the most extreme poverty to incurring such a suspicion. I observed that were I he, I would have left her the sum I had originally intended, as, in case of his death, it would be a flattering proof of his esteem for her, and she had always the power of refusing the whole or any part of the bequest she thought proper. It appeared to me that the more delicacy and disinterestedness she displayed, the more decided ought he to be in marking his appreciation of her conduct. He appeared to agree with me, and passed many encomiums on the Countess.

He talked to-day of Sir Francis Burdett, of whose public and private character he entertains the most exalted opinion.* He said that it was gratifying to behold in him the rare union of a heart and head that left nothing to be desired, and dwelt with evident pride and pleasure on the mental courage displayed by Sir Francis in befriending and supporting him, when so many of his professed friends stood aloof, on his separation from Lady Byron. The defalcation of his friends at the moment he most required them has made an indelible impression on his mind, and has given him a very bad opinion of his countrymen. I endeavoured to reason him out of this by urging the principle that mankind *en masse* are everywhere the same; but he denied this on the plea that, as civilization had arrived at a greater degree of perfection in England than elsewhere,

* Sir Francis Burdett, Bart.—born January 25th, 1770; died January 23rd, 1844—was noted in early life for marrying the youngest daughter of Mr. Coutts, for the intensity of his Radicalism, and for his capacity as a public speaker. He was imprisoned in the Tower in 1819 by the House of Commons for breach of privilege; he was prosecuted by the Government in 1820 for denouncing the "Peterloo Massacre," and sentenced to three months' imprisonment and a fine of £2,000; his name was struck out of the Commission of the Peace. At the age of sixty-five, and after representing Westminster as a Radical for many years, he was returned for Wiltshire as a Tory. He was a man of education, and he was highly respected even by those who disliked his political opinions and conduct.

selfishness, its concomitant, there flourished so luxuriantly, as to overgrow all generous and kind feelings. He quoted various examples of friends, and even the nearest relations, deserting each other in the hour of need, fearful that any part of the censure heaped on some less fortunate connexion might fall on them.

I am unwilling to believe that his pictures are not overdrawn, and hope I shall always think so—

"Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

"Talking of friends," said Byron, "Mr. Hobhouse has been the most impartial, or perhaps" (added he) "*unpartial*, of all my friends; he always told me my faults, but I must do him the justice to add that he told them to *me*, and not to others." I observed that the epithet impartial was the applicable one; but he denied it, saying that Mr. Hobhouse must have been *unpartial* to have discerned all the errors he had pointed out; "but," he added, laughing, "I could have told him of some more which he had not discovered; for even then *avarice* had made itself strongly felt in my nature."

Byron came to see us to-day, and appeared extremely discomposed. After half-an-hour's conversation on indifferent subjects, he at length broke forth with, "Only fancy my receiving to-

day a tragedy dedicated as follows: 'From George [Rose?] to George Byron!' This is being cool with a vengeance. I never was more provoked. How stupid, how ignorant to pass over my rank! I am determined not to read the tragedy; for a man capable of committing such a solecism in good breeding and common decency can write nothing worthy of being read." We were astonished at witnessing the annoyance this circumstance gave him, and more than ever convinced that the pride of aristocracy is one of the peculiar features of his character. If he sometimes forgets his rank, he never can forgive anyone else's doing so; and as he is not naturally dignified, and his propensity to flippancy renders him still less so, he often finds himself in a false position by endeavouring to recover lost ground.

We endeavoured to console him by telling him that we knew Mr. George [Rose?] a little, and that he was clever and agreeable, as also that his passing over the title of Byron was meant as a compliment; it was a delicate preference shown to the renown accorded to George Byron the poet over the rank and title, which were adventitious advantages ennobled by the possessor, but that could add nothing to his fame. All our arguments were vain; he said, "This could not be the man's feelings, as he reduced him (Lord Byron) to the same level as himself." It is

strange to see a person of such brilliant and powerful genius sullied by such incongruities. Were he but sensible how much the *Lord* is overlooked in the *Poet*, he would be less vain of his rank; but as it is, this vanity is very prominent, and resembles more the pride of a *parvenu* than the calm dignity of an ancient aristocrat. It is also evident that he attaches importance to the appendages of rank and station. The trappings of luxury, to which a short use accustoms everyone, seem to please him; he observes, nay, comments upon them, and oh! mortifying conclusion, appears, at least for the moment, to think more highly of their possessors. As his own mode of life is so extremely simple, this seems the more extraordinary; but everything in him is contradictory and extraordinary. Of his friends he remarks, "This or that person is a man of family, or he is a *parvenu*, the marks of which character, in spite of all his affected gentility, break out in a thousand ways." We were not prepared for this; we expected to meet a man more disposed to respect the nobility of genius than that of rank; but we have found the reverse.

In talking of Ravenna, the natal residence of the Countess Guiccioli, he dwells with peculiar complacency on the equipage of her husband; talks of the six black carriage-horses, without which the old Count seldom moved, and their

spacious palazzo ; also the wealth of the Count and the distinguished connexions of the lady. He describes the Countess as being of the middle stature, finely formed, exquisitely fair, her features perfectly regular, and the expression of her countenance remarkable for its animation and sweetness, her hair auburn and of great beauty. No wonder, then, that such rare charms have had power to fix his truant heart ; and, as he says that to these she unites accomplishments and amiability, it may be concluded, as indeed he declares, that this is his last attachment. He frequently talks of Alfieri, and always with enthusiastic admiration.* He remarks on the similarity of their tastes and pursuits, their domesticating themselves with women of rank, their fondness for animals, and, above all, for horses ; their liking to be surrounded by birds and pets of various descriptions ; their passionate love of liberty, habitual gloom, etc., etc. In short, he produces so many points of resemblance, that it leads one to suspect that he is a copy of an original he has long studied.

* Count Vittorio Alfieri — born January 17th, 1741 ; died October 8th, 1803—is one of the most noteworthy among modern Italian poets. His tragedies are deservedly admired. The Countess of Albany, widow of Charles Stuart, the Young Pretender, lived with him ; and when she died twenty years after him, her remains were placed at her request by the side of his in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence.

This, again, proceeds from a want of self-respect; but we may well pardon it, when we reflect on the abuse, calumny, envy, hatred, and malice, that, in spite of all his genius, have pursued him from the country that genius must adorn.

Talking of Alfieri, he told me to-day that when that poet was travelling in Italy, a very romantic, and, as he called her, *tête montée* Italian Principessa, or Duchessa, who had long been an enthusiastic admirer of his works, having heard that he was to pass within fifty miles of her residence, set off to encounter him; and having arrived at the inn where he sojourned, was shown into a room where she was told Alfieri was writing. She enters, agitated and fatigued—sees a very good-looking man seated at a table, whom she concludes must be Alfieri—throws herself into his arms—and, in broken words, declares her admiration, and the distance she has come to declare it. In the midst of the lady's impassioned speeches, Alfieri enters the room, casts a glance of surprise and *hauteur* at the pair, and lets fall some expression that discloses to the humbled Principessa the shocking mistake she has made.

The poor Secretary (for such he was) is blamed by the lady, while he declares his innocence, finding himself, as he says, in the embraces of a

lady who never allowed him even a moment to interrupt her, by the simple question of what she meant! Alfieri retired in offended dignity, shocked that anyone could be mistaken for him, while the Principessa had to retrace her steps, her enthusiasm somewhat cooled by the mistake and its consequences.

Byron says that the number of anonymous amatory letters and portraits he has received, and all from English ladies, would fill a large volume. He says he has never noticed any of them; but it is evident he recurs to them with complacency.

He talked to-day of a very different kind of letter, which appears to have made a profound impression on him; he has promised to show it to me; it is from a Mr. Sheppard, inclosing him a prayer offered up for Byron, by the wife of Mr. Sheppard, and sent since her death. He says he never was more touched than on perusing it, and that it has given him a better opinion of human nature.

The following is the copy of the letter and prayer which Lord Byron has permitted me to make:

"TO LORD BYRON.

"Frome, Somerset,
"November 21st, 1821.

"My Lord,

"More than two years since, a lovely and beloved wife was taken from me, by lingering disease, after a very short union. She

possessed unvarying gentleness and fortitude, and a piety so retiring as rarely to disclose itself in words, but so influential as to produce uniform benevolence of conduct. In the last hour of life, after a farewell look on a lately-born and only infant, for whom she had evinced inexpressible affection, her last whispers were, 'God's happiness!—God's happiness!'

"Since the second anniversary of her decease, I have read some papers which no one had seen during her life, and which contain her most secret thoughts. I am induced to communicate to your Lordship a passage from these papers, which there is no doubt refers to yourself, as I have more than once heard the writer mention your agility on the rocks at Hastings.

"'Oh, my God, I take encouragement from the assurance of Thy Word, to pray to Thee in behalf of one for whom I have lately been much interested. May the person to whom I allude (and who is now, we fear, as much distinguished for his neglect of Thee as for the transcendent talents Thou hast bestowed on him) be awakened to a sense of his own danger, and led to seek that peace of mind in a proper sense of religion which he has found this world's enjoyment unable to procure! Do Thou grant that his future example may be productive of far more extensive benefit than his past conduct and writings have been of evil; and may the Sun of Righteousness, which we trust will, at some future period, arise on him, be bright in proportion to the darkness of those clouds which guilt has raised around him, and the balm which it bestows, healing and soothing in proportion to the keenness of that agony which the punishment of his vices has inflicted on him! May the hope that the sincerity of my own efforts for the attainment of holiness—and the approval of my own love to the Great Author of religion, will render this prayer, and every other for the welfare of mankind, more efficacious—cheer me in the path of duty; but, let me not forget, that while we are permitted to animate ourselves to exertion by every innocent motive, these are but the lesser streams which may serve to increase the current, but which, deprived of the grand fountain of good (a deep conviction of inborn sin, and firm belief in the efficacy of Christ's death for the salvation of those who trust in Him, and

really wish to serve Him), would soon dry up, and leave us barren of every virtue as before.—*Hastings, July 31st*, 1814.'

"There is nothing, my Lord, in this extract which, in a literary sense, can at all interest you; but it may, perhaps, appear to you worthy of reflection how deep and expansive a concern for the happiness of others the Christian faith can awaken in the midst of youth and prosperity. Here is nothing poetical and splendid, as in the expostulatory homage of M. De Lamartine; but here is the *sublime*, my Lord; for this intercession was offered, on your account, to the supreme *Source* of happiness. It sprang from a faith more confirmed than that of the French poet, and from a charity which, in combination with faith, showed its power unimpaired amidst the languors and pains of approaching dissolution. I will hope that a prayer, which, I am sure, was deeply sincere, may not always be unavailing.

"It would add *nothing*, my Lord, to the fame with which your genius has surrounded you, for an unknown and obscure individual to express his admiration of it. I had rather be numbered with those who wish and pray that 'wisdom from above,' and 'peace,' and 'joy,' may enter such a mind.

"JOHN SHEPPARD."

On reading this letter and prayer, which Byron did aloud, before he consigned it to me to copy, and with a voice tremulous from emotion, and a seriousness of aspect that showed how deeply it affected him, he observed, "Before I had read this prayer, I never rightly understood the expression, so often used, 'The beauty of holiness.' This prayer and letter have done more to give me a good opinion of religion and its professors, than all the religious books I ever read in my life.

"Here were two most amiable and exalted minds offering prayers and wishes for the salvation of one considered by three parts of his countrymen to be beyond the pale of hope, and charitably doomed to everlasting torments. The religion that prays and hopes for the *erring* is the true religion, and the only one that could make a convert of me; and I date (continued Byron) my first impressions against religion to having witnessed how little its votaries were actuated by any true feeling of Christian charity. Instead of lamenting the disbelief, or pitying the transgressions (or at least their consequences) of the sinner, they at once cast him off, dwell with acrimony on his errors, and, not content with foredooming him to eternal punishment hereafter, endeavour, as much as they can, to render his earthly existence as painful as possible, until they have hardened him in his errors, and added hatred of his species to their number. Were all religious people like Mr. Sheppard and the amiable wife he has lost, we should have fewer sceptics: such examples would do more towards the work of conversion than all that ever was written on the subject.

"When Religion supports the sufferer in affliction and sickness, even unto death, its advantages are so visible that all must wish to seek such a consolation; and when it speaks peace and hope to those who have strayed from its path, it softens

feelings that severity must have hardened, and leads back the wanderer to the fold; but when it clothes itself in anger, denouncing vengeance, or shows itself in the pride of superior righteousness, condemning, rather than pitying, all erring brothers, it repels the wavering, and fixes the unrepentant in their sins. Such a religion can make few converts, but may make many dissenters, to its tenets; for in religion, as in everything else, its utility must be apparent, to encourage people to adopt its precepts; and the utility is never so evident as when we see professors of religion supported by its consolations, and willing to extend these consolations to those who have still more need of them—the misguided and the erring."

Those who accuse Byron of being an unbeliever are wrong: he is *sceptical*, but not unbelieving; and it appears not unlikely to me that a time may come when his wavering faith in many of the tenets of religion may be as firmly fixed as is now his conviction of the immortality of the soul—a conviction that he declares every fine and noble impulse of his nature renders more decided. He is a sworn foe to Materialism, tracing every defect to which we are subject, to the infirmities entailed on us by the prison of clay in which the heavenly spark is confined. *Conscience*, he says, is to him another proof of the

Divine Origin of Man, as is also his natural tendency to the love of good. A fine day, a moonlight night, or any other fine object in the phenomena of nature, excites (said Byron) strong feelings of religion in all elevated minds, and an outpouring of the spirit to the Creator, that, call it what we may, is the essence of innate love and gratitude to the Divinity.

There is a seriousness in Byron's manner when he gets warmed by his subject, that impresses one with the truth of his statements. He observed to me, "I seldom *talk* of religion, but I *feel* it, perhaps, more than those who do. I speak to you on this topic freely, because I know you will neither laugh at, nor enter into a controversy with me. It is strange, but true, that Mrs. Sheppard is mixed up with all my religious aspirations: nothing ever so excited my imagination and touched my heart as her prayer. I have pictured her to myself a thousand times in the solitude of her chamber, struck by a malady that generally engrosses all feelings for self, and those near and dear to one, thinking *of*, and praying for *me*, who was deemed by all an outcast. Her purity—her blameless life—and the deep humility expressed in her prayer—render her, in my mind, the most interesting and angelic creature that ever existed, and she mingles in all my thoughts of a future state. I would give

anything to have her portrait, though perhaps it would destroy the *beau idéal* I have formed of her.

"What strange thoughts pass through the mind, and how much are we influenced by adventitious circumstances! The phrase *lovely*, in the letter of Mr. Sheppard, has invested the memory of his wife with a double interest; but beauty and goodness have always been associated in my mind, because, through life, I have found them generally go together. I do not talk of mere beauty (continued Byron) of feature or complexion, but of expression, that looking out of the soul through the eyes, which, in my opinion, constitutes true beauty. Women have been pointed out to me as beautiful who never could have interested my feelings, from their want of countenance, or expression, which means countenance; and others, who were little remarked, have struck me as being captivating, from the force of countenance. A woman's face ought to be like an April day—susceptible of change and variety; but sunshine should often gleam over it, to replace the clouds and showers that may obscure its lustre—which, poetical description apart (said Byron), in sober prose means, that good-humoured smiles ought to be ready to chase away the expression of pensiveness or care that sentiment or earthly ills call forth. Women were

meant to be the exciters of all that is finest in our natures, and the soothers of all that is turbulent and harsh. Of what use, then, can a handsome automaton be, after one has got acquainted with a face that knows no change, though it causes many? This is a style of looks I could not bear the sight of for a week; and yet such are the looks that pass in society for pretty, handsome, and beautiful.

"How beautiful Lady C[owper?] was! She had no great variety of expression, but the predominant ones were purity, calmness, and abstraction. She looked as if she had never *caused* an unhallowed sentiment, or felt one—a sort of 'moonbeam on the snow,' as our friend Moore would describe her, that was lovely to look on. Lady Adelaide Forbes *was* also very handsome. It is melancholy to talk of women in the past tense. What a pity, that of all flowers, none fade so soon as beauty! Poor Lady Adelaide Forbes has not got married. Do you know, I once had some thoughts of her as a wife; not that I was in love, as people call it, but I had argued myself into a belief that I ought to marry, and meeting her very often in society, the notion came into my head, not heart, that she would suit me.*

* In a letter to Moore, dated July 13th, 1813, Byron wrote: "Do you know, Moore, I am amazingly inclined—remember, I say but *inclined*—to be seriously enamoured with Lady A. Forbes."

Moore, too, told me so much of her good qualities, all which was, I believe, quite true, that I felt tempted to propose to her, but did not, whether *tant mieux* or *tant pis*, God knows, supposing my proposal accepted.

"No marriage could have turned out more unfortunately than the one I made—that is quite certain; and, to add to my agreeable reflections on this subject, I have the consciousness that had I possessed sufficient command over my own wayward humour, I might have rendered myself so dear and necessary to Lady Byron, that she would not, could not, have left me. It is certainly not very gratifying to my vanity to have been *planté* after so short a union, and within a few weeks after being made a father—a circumstance that one would suppose likely to cement the attachment. I always get out of temper when I recur to this subject; and yet, *malgré moi*, I find myself continually recurring to it."

And on May 12th, 1817, he wrote to him: "The Apollo Belvidere is the image of Lady Adelaide Forbes—I think I never saw such a likeness."

CHAPTER V.

A chameleon—Difficulty in describing Byron—John Kemble—A gazing multitude—Byron's fondness for flowers—His candour—A parody—Luttrell—His "Advice to Julia"—What Moore was meant for—The evanescence of genius—Byron's dread of ridicule—Inherited bad temper—"The Deformed Transformed"—Reminiscence—Byron's sensitiveness regarding his lameness—His desultory reading—Count Pietro Gamba—"The Age of Bronze"—An anonymous author—Byron's love of mystification.

Byron is a perfect chameleon, possessing the fabulous quality attributed to that animal, of taking the colour of whatever touches him. He is conscious of this, and says it is owing to the extreme *mobilité* of his nature, which yields to present impressions.

It appears to me, that the consciousness of his own defects renders him still less tolerant to those of others—this perhaps is owing to their attempts to conceal them, more than from natural severity, as he condemns hypocrisy more than any other vice—saying it is the origin of all. If vanity, selfishness, or mundane sentiments, are brought in contact with him, every arrow in the armoury of

ridicule is let fly, and there is no shield sufficiently powerful to withstand them. If vice approaches, he assails it with the bitterest gall of satire; but when goodness appears, and he is assured that it is sincere, all the dormant affections of his nature are excited, and it is impossible not to observe, how tender and affectionate a heart his must have been, ere circumstances had soured it. This was never more displayed than in the impression made on him by the prayer of Mrs. Sheppard, and the letter of her husband. It is also evident in the generous impulses that he betrays on hearing of distress or misfortune, which he endeavours to alleviate; and, unlike the world in general, Byron never makes light of the griefs of others, but shows commiseration and kindness.

There are days when he excites so strong an interest and sympathy, by showing such undoubted proofs of good feeling, that every previous impression to his disadvantage fades away, and one is vexed with one's self for ever having harboured them. But, alas! "the morrow comes," and he is no longer the same being. Some disagreeable letter, review, or new example of the slanders with which he has been for years assailed, changes the whole current of his feelings—renders him reckless, sardonic, and as unlike the Byron of the day before, as if they had nothing in common—nay, he seems determined to efface

any good impression he might have made, and appears angry with himself for having yielded to the kindly feelings that gave birth to it. After such exhibitions, one feels perplexed what opinion to form of him; and the individual who has an opportunity of seeing Byron very often, and for any length of time, if he or she stated the daily impressions candidly, would find, on reviewing them, a mass of heterogeneous evidence, from which it would be most difficult to draw a just conclusion. The affectionate manner in which he peaks of some of his juvenile companions has a delicacy and tenderness resembling the nature of woman more than that of man, and leads me to think that an extreme sensitiveness, checked by coming in contact with persons incapable of appreciating it, and affections chilled by finding a want of sympathy, have repelled, but could not eradicate, the seeds of goodness that now often send forth blossoms, and, with culture, may yet produce precious fruit.

I am sure, that if ten individuals undertook the task of describing Byron, no two, of the ten, would agree in their verdict respecting him, or convey any portrait that resembled the other, and yet the description of each might be correct, according to his or her received opinion; but the truth is, the chameleon-like character or manner of Byron renders it difficult to portray him; and

the pleasure he seems to take in misleading his associates in their estimate of him increases the difficulty of the task. This extraordinary fancy of his has so often struck me, that I expect to see all the persons who have lived with him giving portraits, each unlike the other, and yet all bearing a resemblance to the original at some one time. Like the pictures given of some celebrated actor in his different characters, each likeness is affected by the dress and the part he has to fill. The portrait of John Kemble in Cato resembles not Macbeth nor Hamlet, and yet each is an accurate likeness of that admirable actor in those characters; so Byron, changing every day, and fond of misleading those who he suspects might be inclined to paint him, will always appear different from the hand of each limner.

During our rides in the vicinity of Genoa, we frequently met several persons, almost all of them English, who evidently had taken that route purposely to see Lord Byron. "Which is he?" "That's he," I have frequently heard whispered as the different groups extended their heads to gaze at him, while he has turned to me—his pale face assuming, for the moment, a warmer tint—and said, "How very disagreeable it is to be so stared at! If you knew how I detest it, you would feel how great must be my desire to enjoy the society of my friends at the Hôtel

de la Ville, when I pay the price of passing through the town, and exposing myself to the gazing multitude on the stairs and in the antechambers."

Yet there were days when he seemed more pleased than displeased at being followed and stared at. All depended on the humour he was in. When gay, he attributed the attention he excited to the true cause — admiration of his genius; but when in a less good-natured humour, he looked on it as an impertinent curiosity, caused by the scandalous histories circulated against him, and resented it as such.

He was peculiarly fond of flowers, and generally bought a large bouquet every day from a gardener whose grounds we passed. He told me that he liked to have them in his room, though they excited melancholy feelings, by reminding him of the evanescence of all that is beautiful, but that the melancholy was of a softer, milder character, than his general feelings.

Observing Byron one day in more than usually low spirits, I asked him if anything painful had occurred. He sighed deeply, and said: "No, nothing new; the old wounds are still unhealed, and bleed afresh on the slightest touch, so that God knows there needs nothing new. Can I reflect on my present position without bitter feelings? Exiled from my country

by a species of ostracism — the most humiliating to a proud mind, when *daggers* and not shells were used to ballot, inflicting mental wounds more deadly and difficult to be healed than all that the body could suffer. Then the notoriety (as I call what you would kindly name fame) that follows me, precludes the privacy I desire, and renders me an object of curiosity, which is a continual source of irritation to my feelings. I am bound, by the indissoluble ties of marriage, to *one* who will *not* live with me, and live with one to whom I cannot give a legal right to be my companion, and who, wanting that right, is placed in a position humiliating to her and most painful to me.

"Were the Countess Guiccioli and I married, we should, I am sure, be cited as an example of conjugal happiness, and the domestic and retired life we lead would entitle us to respect; but our union, wanting the legal and religious part of the ceremony of marriage, draws on us both censure and blame. She is formed to make a good wife to any man to whom she attached herself. She is fond of retirement—is of a most affectionate disposition—and noble-minded and disinterested to the highest degree. Judge, then, how mortifying it must be to me to be the cause of placing her in a false position. All this is not thought of when people are blinded by passion, but when

passion is replaced by better feelings—those of affection, friendship, and confidence—when, in short, the *liaison* has all of marriage but its forms, then it is that we wish to give it the respectability of wedlock. It is painful (said Byron) to find one's self growing old without—

> "'That which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends.'

I feel this keenly, reckless as I appear, though there are few to whom I would avow it, and certainly not to a man."

"With all my faults," said Byron one day, "and they are, as you will readily believe, innumerable, I have never traduced the only two women with whom I was ever domesticated, Lady Byron and the Countess Guiccioli. Though I have had, God knows, reason to complain of Lady Byron's leaving me, and all that her desertion entailed, I defy malice itself to prove that I ever spoke against her; on the contrary, I have always given her credit for the many excellent and amiable qualities she possesses, or at least possessed, when I knew her; and I have only to regret that forgiveness for real or imagined wrongs was not amongst their number. Of the Guiccioli, I could not, if I would, speak ill; her conduct towards me has been faultless, and there are few examples of such complete

and disinterested affection as she has shown towards me all through our attachment."

I observed in Lord Byron a candour in talking of his own defects, nay, a seeming pleasure in dwelling on them, that I never remarked in any other person: I told him this one day, and he answered, "Well, does not that give you hopes of my amendment?" My reply was, "No; I fear, by continually recapitulating them, you will get so accustomed to their existence as to conquer your disgust of them. You remind me of Belcour, in the 'West Indian,' when he exclaims, 'No one sins with more repentance, or repents with less amendment than I do.'"* He laughed, and said, "Well, only wait, and you will see me one day become all that I ought to be; I am determined to *leave* my sins, and not wait until *they* leave me: I have reflected seriously on all my faults, and that is the first step towards amendment. Nay, I have made more progress than people give me credit for; but, the truth is, I have such a detestation of cant, and am so fearful of being suspected of yielding to its outcry, that I make myself appear rather *worse* than better than I am."

* The passage occurs in Richard Cumberland's "West Indian," which was first acted at Drury Lane Theatre in 1771, and runs thus: "Sure no man sins with so much repentance, or repents with so little amendment, as I do."—Act III., scene 3.

"You will believe me, what I sometimes believe myself, mad," said Byron one day, "when I tell you that I seem to have *two* states of existence, *one* purely contemplative, during which the crimes, faults, and follies of mankind are laid open to my view (my own forming a prominent object in the picture), and the other *active*, when I play my part in the drama of life, as if impelled by some power over which I have no control, though the consciousness of doing wrong remains. It is as though I had the faculty of discovering error, without the power of avoiding it. How do you account for this?"

I answered, "That, like all the phenomena of thought, it was unaccountable; but that contemplation, when too much indulged, often produced the same effect on the mental faculties that the dwelling on bodily ailments effected in the physical powers — we might become so well acquainted with diseases, as to find all their symptoms in ourselves and others, without the power of preventing or curing them; nay, by the force of imagination, might end in the belief that we were afflicted with them to such a degree as to lose all enjoyment of life, which state is termed hypochondria; but the hypochondria which arises from the belief in mental diseases is still more insupportable, and is increased by con-

templation of the supposed crimes or faults, so that the mind should be often relaxed from its extreme tension, and other and less exciting subjects of reflection presented to it. Excess in thinking, like all other excesses, produces reaction, and add the two words 'too much' before the word thinking, in the two lines of the admirable parody of the brothers Smith—

> "'Thinking is but an idle waste of thought,
> And nought is every thing, and every thing is nought;'

and, instead of parody, it becomes true philosophy."

We both laughed at the abstract subject we had fallen upon; and Byron remarked, "How few would guess the general topics that occupy our conversation!" I added, "It may not, perhaps, be very amusing, but at all events it is better than scandal." He shook his head, and said, "All subjects are good in their way, provided they are sufficiently diversified; but scandal has something so piquant—it is a sort of cayenne to the mind—that I confess I like it, particularly if the objects are one's particular friends."

"Of course you know Luttrell," said Lord Byron. "He is a most agreeable member of society, the best sayer of good things, and the most epigrammatic conversationist I ever met: there is a terseness, and wit, mingled with fancy,

in his observations, that no one else possesses, and no one so peculiarly understands the *apropos*. His 'Advice to Julia' is pointed, witty, and full of observation, showing in every line a knowledge of society, and a tact rarely met with. Then, unlike all, or most other wits, Luttrell is never obtrusive; even the choicest *bons mots* are only brought forth when perfectly applicable, and then are given in a tone of good breeding which enhances their value."*

"Moore is very sparkling in a choice or chosen society (said Byron); with lord and lady listeners he shines like a diamond, and thinks that, like that precious stone, his brilliancy should be

* Writing in his Diary on August 12th, 1820, Moore says the "Advice to Julia" is "full of well-bred facetiousness and sparkle of the very first water." Luttrell said many clever things, and he made a most mistaken forecast of the Duke of Wellington. When the latter was a captain, he said to himself, as he told Moore, "Well, let who will get on in this world, *you* certainly will not." The following are two fair specimens of his verses. In the first he neatly compliments Ellen Tree, then very young, and who became Mrs. Charles Kean in 1842:

"On this Tree if a nightingale settles and sings,
This Tree will return her as good as she brings."

The second is an epitaph on a man who had been run over by an omnibus:

"Killed by an omnibus—why not?
So quick a death a boon is.
Let not his friends lament his lot,—
Mors omnibus communis."

reserved *pour le beau monde*. Moore has a happy disposition, his temper is good, and he has a sort of fire-fly imagination, always in movement, and in each evolution displaying new brilliancy. He has not done justice to himself in living so much in society; many of his talents are frittered away in display, to support the character of 'a man of wit about town,' and Moore was meant for something better.

"Society and genius are incompatible, and the latter can rarely, if ever, be in close or frequent contact with the former, without degenerating: it is otherwise with wit and talent, which are excited and brought into play by the friction of society, which polishes and sharpens both. I judge from personal experience; and as some portion of genius has been attributed to me, I suppose I may, without any extraordinary vanity, quote my ideas on this subject.

"Well, then (continued Byron), if I have any genius (which I grant is problematical), all I can say is that I have always found it fade away, like snow before the sun, when I have been living much in the world. My ideas became dispersed and vague, I lost the power of concentrating my thoughts, and became another being: you will perhaps think a better, on the principle that any change in me must be for the better; but no, instead of this, I became worse,

for the recollection of former mental power remained, reproaching me with present inability, and increased my natural irritability. It must be this consciousness of diminished power that renders old people peevish, and, I suspect, the peevishness will be in proportion to former ability. Those who have once accustomed themselves to think and reflect deeply in solitude, will soon begin to find society irksome; the small money of conversation will appear insignificant, after the weighty metal of thought to which they have been used, and like the man who was exposed to the evils of poverty while in possession of one of the largest diamonds in the world, which, from its size, could find no purchaser, such a man will find himself in society unable to change his lofty and profound thoughts into the conventional small-talk of those who surround him.

"But, bless me, how I have been holding forth! (said Byron). Madame de Staël herself never declaimed more energetically, or succeeded better in *ennuyant* her auditors than I have done, as I perceive you look dreadfully bored. I fear I am grown a sad proser, which is a bad thing, more especially after having been, what I swear to you I once heard a lady call me, a sad poet. The whole of my tirade might have been comprised in the simple statement of my belief that

genius shuns society, and that, except for the indulgence of vanity, society would be well disposed to return the compliment, as they have little in common between them.

"Who would willingly possess genius? None, I am persuaded, who knew the misery it entails, its temperament producing continual irritation, destructive alike to health and happiness—and what are its advantages?—to be envied, hated, and persecuted in life, and libelled in death. Wealth may be pardoned (continued Byron) if its possessor diffuses it liberally; beauty may be forgiven provided it is accompanied by folly; talent may meet with toleration if it be not of a very superior order, but genius can hope for no mercy. If it be of a stamp that insures its currency, those who are compelled to receive it will indemnify themselves by finding out a thousand imperfections in the owner, and as they cannot approach his elevation, will endeavour to reduce him to their level by dwelling on the errors from which genius is not exempt, and which forms the only point of resemblance between them. We hear the errors of men of genius continually brought forward, while those that belong to mediocrity are unnoticed; hence people conclude that errors peculiarly appertain to genius, and that those who boast it not are saved from them. Happy delusion! but not even

this belief can induce them to commiserate the faults they condemn.

"It is the fate of genius to be viewed with severity instead of the indulgence that it ought to meet, from the gratification it dispenses to others; as if its endowments could preserve the possessor from the alloy that marks the nature of mankind. Who can walk the earth, with eyes fixed on the heavens, without often stumbling over the hindrances that intercept the path? while those who are intent only on the beaten road escape. Such is the fate of men of genius: elevated over the herd of their fellow-men, with thoughts that soar above the sphere of their physical existence, no wonder that they stumble when treading the mazes of ordinary life, with irritated sensibility, and mistaken views of all the common occurrences they encounter."

Lord Byron dined with us to-day: we all observed that he was evidently discomposed: the dinner and servants had no sooner disappeared, than he quoted an attack against himself in some newspaper as the cause. He was very much irritated—much more so than the subject merited—and showed how keenly alive he is to censure, though he takes so little pains to avoid exciting it.

This is a strange anomaly that I have observed in Byron—an extreme susceptibility to censorious

observations, and a want of tact in not knowing how to steer clear of giving cause to them, that is extraordinary. He winces under castigation, and writhes in agony under the infliction of ridicule, yet gives rise to attack every day. Ridicule is, however, the weapon he most dreads, perhaps because it is the one he wields with most power; and I observe he is sensitively alive to its slightest approach. It is also the weapon with which he assails all; friend and foe alike come under its cutting point; and the laugh, which accompanies each sally, as a deadly incision is made in some vulnerable quarter, so little accords with the wound inflicted, that it is as though one were struck down by summer lightning while admiring its brilliant play.

Byron likes not contradiction: he waxed wroth to-day, because I defended a friend of mine whom he attacked, but ended by taking my hand, and saying he honoured me for the warmth with which I defended an absent friend, adding with irony, "Moreover, when he is not a poet, or even prose writer, by whom you can hope to be repaid by being handed down to posterity as his defender.

"I often think," said Byron, "that I inherit my violence and bad temper from my poor mother—not that my father, from all I could ever learn, had a much better; so that it is no wonder

I have such a very bad one. As long as I can remember anything, I recollect being subject to violent paroxysms of rage, so disproportioned to the cause as to surprise me when they were over, and this still continues. I cannot coolly view anything that excites my feelings ; and once the lurking devil in me is roused, I lose all command of myself. I do not recover a good fit of rage for days after : mind, I do not by this mean that the ill-humour continues, as, on the contrary, that quickly subsides, exhausted by its own violence ; but it shakes me terribly, and leaves me low and nervous after. Depend on it, people's tempers must be corrected while they are children ; for not all the good resolutions in the world can enable a man to conquer habits of ill-humour or rage, however he may regret having given way to them.

" My poor mother was generally in a rage every day, and used to render me sometimes almost frantic ; particularly when, in her passion, she reproached me with my personal deformity ; I have left her presence to rush into solitude, where, unseen, I could vent the rage and mortification I endured, and curse the deformity that I now began to consider as a signal mark of the injustice of Providence. Those were bitter moments : even now, the impression of them is vivid in my mind ; and they cankered a heart that I

believe was naturally affectionate, and destroyed a temper always disposed to be violent. It was my feelings at this period that suggested the idea of 'The Deformed Transformed.' I often look back on the days of my childhood, and am astonished at the recollection of the intensity of my feelings at that period ;—first impressions are indelible. My poor mother, and after her my schoolfellows, by their taunts, led me to consider my lameness as the greatest misfortune, and I have never been able to conquer this feeling.

"It requires great natural goodness of disposition, as well as reflection, to conquer the corroding bitterness that deformity engenders in the mind, and which, while preying on itself, sours one towards all the world. I have read that where personal deformity exists, it may be always traced in the face, however handsome the face may be. I am sure that what is meant by this is that the consciousness of it gives to the countenance an habitual expression of discontent, which I believe is the case; yet it is too bad (added Byron with bitterness) that, because one has a defective foot, one cannot have a perfect face."

He indulges a morbid feeling on this subject that is extraordinary, and that leads me to think it has had a powerful effect in forming his character. As Byron had said that his own

position had led to his writing "The Deformed Transformed," I ventured to remind him that, in the advertisement to that drama, he had stated it to have been founded on the novel of "The Three Brothers." He said that both statements were correct, and then changed the subject without giving me an opportunity of questioning him on the unacknowledged, but visible, resemblances between other of his works and that extraordinary production. It is possible that he is unconscious of the plagiary of ideas he has committed, for his reading is so desultory that he seizes thoughts which, in passing through the glowing alembic of his mind, become so embellished as to lose all identity with the original crude embryos he had adopted. This was proved to me in another instance, when a book that he was constantly in the habit of looking over fell into my hands, and I traced various passages marked by his pencil or by his notes, which gave me the idea of having led to certain trains of thought in his works. He told me that he rarely ever read a page that did not give rise to chains of thought, the first idea serving as the original link on which the others were formed—

"Awake but one, and, lo! what myriads rise!"

I have observed that, in conversation, some trifling remark has often led him into long dis-

quisitions, evidently elicited by it; and so prolific is his imagination, that the slightest spark can warm it.

Count Pietro Gamba* lent me the "Age of Bronze," with a request that his having done so should be kept a profound secret, as Lord Byron, he said, would be angry if he knew it. This is another instance of the love of mystification that marks Byron, in trifles as well as in things of more importance. What can be the motive for concealing a *published* book that is in the hands of all England?

* The brother of Countess Guiccioli.

CHAPTER VI.

Napoleon—His lack of sympathy—The brothers Smith—The "Rejected Addresses"—"Cui Bono"—Byron's marvellous memory—His love of solitude—An enormous inkstand—A giant shaving himself—The sublime and the ridiculous—A hoax—The mad Earl of Portsmouth—Cant in America—The American navy—John Wilson Croker—Bryan Waller Procter ("Barry Cornwall")—Byron on marriage—Benjamin Constant—An antidote to Madame de Staël's "Corinne"—The advantages of blindness and the inutility of beauty.

Byron talks often of Napoleon, of whom he is a great admirer, and says that what he most likes in his character is his want of sympathy, which proved his knowledge of human nature, as those only could possess sympathy who were in happy ignorance of it. I told him that this carried its own punishment with it, as Napoleon found the want of sympathy when he most required it, and that some portion of what he affected to despise, namely, enthusiasm and sympathy, would have saved him from the degradations he twice underwent when deserted by those on whom he counted. Not all Byron's

expressed contempt for mankind can induce me to believe that he has the feeling; this is one of the many little artifices which he condescends to make use of to excite surprise in his hearers, and can only impose on the credulous.

He is vexed when he discovers that any of his little *ruses* have not succeeded, and is like a spoiled child who finds out he cannot have everything his own way. Were he but sensible of his own powers, how infinitely superior would he be, for he would see the uselessness, as well as unworthiness, of being artificial, and of acting to support the character he wishes to play,—a misanthrope, which nature never intended him for, and which he is not and never will be. I see a thousand instances of good feeling in Byron, but rarely a single proof of stability; his abuse of friends, which is continual, has always appeared to me more inconsistent than ill-natured, and as if indulged in more to prove that he was superior to the partiality friendship engenders, than that they were unworthy of exciting the sentiment. He has the rage of displaying his knowledge of human nature, and thinks this knowledge more proved by pointing out the blemishes than the perfections of the subjects he anatomizes. Were he to confide in the effect his own natural character would produce, how much more would he be loved and respected;

whereas, at present, those who most admire the genius will be the most disappointed in the man.

The love of mystification is so strong in Byron, that he is continually letting drop mysterious hints of events in his past life : as if to excite curiosity, he assumes, on those occasions, a look and air suited to the insinuation conveyed : if it has excited the curiosity of his hearers, he is satisfied, looks still more mysterious, and changes the subject; but if it fails to rouse curiosity, he becomes evidently discomposed and sulky, stealing sly glances at the person he has been endeavouring to mystify, to observe the effect he has produced. On such occasions I have looked at him a little maliciously, and laughed, without asking a single question ; and I have often succeeded in making him laugh too at those mystifications, *manquée* as I called them.

Byron often talks of the authors of the "Rejected Addresses," and always in terms of unqualified praise.* He says that the imitations,

* The authors of the "Rejected Addresses" were James Smith —born February 10th, 1775 ; died December 24th, 1839—and Horace, his brother—born December 31st, 1779 ; died July 12th, 1849. James wrote the first stanza of "Cui Bono," and Horace the rest ; the second and third run as follows :

II.

"Ye reckless dupes, who hither wend your way
To gaze on puppets in a painted dome,
Pursuing pastimes glittering to betray,
Like falling stars in life's eternal gloom,

unlike all other imitations, are full of genius, and that the "Cui Bono" has some lines that he should wish to have written. "Parodies," he said, "always gave a bad impression of the original, but in the 'Rejected Addresses' the reverse was the fact;" and he quoted the second and third stanzas, in imitation of himself, as admirable, and just what he could have wished to write on a similar subject. His memory is extraordinary, for he can repeat lines from every author whose works have pleased him; and in reciting the passages that have called forth his censure or ridicule, it is no less tenacious. He remarked on the pleasure he felt at meeting people with whom he could go over old subjects of interest, whether on persons or literature, and

What seek ye here? Joy's evanescent bloom?
Woe's me! the brightest wreaths she ever gave
Are but as flowers that decorate a tomb.
Man's heart, the mournful urn o'er which they wave,
Is sacred to despair, its pedestal the grave.

III.

"Has life so little store of real woes,
That here ye wend to taste fictitious grief?
Or is it that from truth such anguish flows,
Ye court the lying drama for relief?
Long shall ye find the pang, the respite brief:
Or if one tolerable page appears
In folly's volume, 'tis the actor's leaf
Who dries his own by drawing other's tears,
And raising present mirth, makes glad his future years."

said that nothing cemented friendship or companionship so strongly as having read the same books and known the same people.

I observed that when, in our rides, we came to any fine point of view, Byron paused, and looked at it, as if to impress himself with the recollection of it. He rarely praised what so evidently pleased him, and he became silent and abstracted for some time after, as if he was noting the principal features of the scene on the tablet of his memory. He told me that, from his earliest youth, he had a passion for solitude; that the sea, whether in a storm or calm, was a source of deep interest to him, and filled his mind with thoughts. "An acquaintance of mine," said Byron, laughing, "who is a votary of the Lake, or simple school, and to whom I once expressed this effect of the sea on me, said that I might in this case say that the ocean served me as a vast inkstand: what do you think of that as a poetical image? It reminds me of a man who, talking of the effect of Mont Blanc from a distant mountain, said that it reminded him of a giant at his toilet, the feet in water, and the face prepared for the operation of shaving. Such observations prove that from the sublime to the ridiculous there is only one step, and really make one disgusted with the simple school."

Recurring to fine scenery, Byron remarked,

"That as artists filled their sketch-books with studies from Nature, to be made use of on after-occasions, so he laid up a collection of images in his mind, as a store to draw on when he required them, and he found the pictures much more vivid in recollection, when he had not exhausted his admiration in expressions, but concentrated his powers in fixing them in memory." The end and aim of his life is to render himself celebrated: hitherto his pen has been the instrument to cut his road to renown, and it has traced a brilliant path; this, he thinks, has lost some of its point, and he is about to change it for the sword, to carve a new road to fame.

Military exploits occupy much of his conversation, and still more of his attention; but even on this subject there is never the slightest *élan*, and it appears extraordinary to see a man about to engage in a chivalrous and, according to the opinion of many, a Utopian undertaking, for which his habits peculiarly unfit him, without any indication of the enthusiasm that leads men to embark in such careers. Perhaps he thinks with Napoleon, that "Il n'y a rien qui refroidit, comme l'énthousiasme des autres"; but he is wrong: coldness has in general a sympathetic effect, and we are less disposed to share the feelings of others, if we observe that those feelings are not as warm as the occasion seems to require.

There is something so exciting in the idea of the greatest poet of his day sacrificing his fortune, his occupations, his enjoyments—in short, offering up on the altar of liberty all the immense advantages which station, fortune, and genius can bestow, that it is impossible to reflect on it without admiration; but when one hears this same person calmly talk of the worthlessness of the people he proposes to make those sacrifices for, the loans he means to advance, the uniforms he intends to wear, entering into petty details, and always with perfect *sang froid*, one's admiration evaporates, and the action loses all its charms, though the real merit of it still remains. Perhaps Byron wishes to show that his going to Greece is more an affair of *principle* than *feeling*, and as such more entitled to respect, though, perhaps, less likely to excite warmer feelings. However this may be, his whole manner and conversation on the subject are calculated to chill the admiration such an enterprize ought to create, and to reduce it to a more ordinary standard.

Byron is evidently in delicate health, brought on by starvation, and a mind too powerful for the frame in which it is lodged. He is obstinate in resisting the advice of medical men and his friends, who all have represented to him the dangerous effects likely to ensue from his present system. He declares that he has no choice but

that of sacrificing the body to the mind, as that when he eats as others do he gets ill, and loses all power over his intellectual faculties; that animal food engenders the appetite of the animal fed upon; and he instances the manner in which boxers are fed as a proof, while, on the contrary, a regimen of fish and vegetables served to support existence without pampering it. I affected to think that his excellency in and fondness of swimming arose from his continually living on fish, and he appeared disposed to admit the possibility, until, being no longer able to support my gravity, I laughed aloud, which for the first minute discomposed him, though he ended by joining heartily in the laugh, and said: "Well, Miladi, after this hoax never accuse me any more of mystifying; you did take me in until you laughed."

Nothing gratifies him so much as being told that he grows thin. This fancy of his is pushed to an almost childish extent, and he frequently asks, "Don't you think I get thinner?" or, "Did you ever see any person so thin as I am who was not ill?" He says he is sure no one could recognize him were he to go to England at present, and seems to enjoy this thought very much.

Byron affects a perfect indifference to the opinion of the world, yet is more influenced by it

than most people—not in his conduct, but in his dread of and wincing under its censures. He was extremely agitated by his name being introduced in the Portsmouth trial,* as having assisted in making up the match, and showed a degree of irritation that proves he is as susceptible as ever to newspaper attacks, notwithstanding his boasts of the contrary. The susceptibility will always leave him at the mercy of all who may choose to write against him, however insignificant they may be.

I noticed Byron one day more than usually

* On February 28th, 1823, John Charles, third Earl of Portsmouth, was declared by a jury to be "a man of unsound mind and condition, and incapable of managing himself and his affairs, and that he was so from January 1st, 1809." He was married on March 7th, 1814, to Mary Anne, the eldest daughter of Mr. Hanson, solicitor to Byron, and Byron gave away the bride. Why he should have done so while the bride's father was alive and present is a puzzle of which the possible solution is that the fact of Byron being a peer was regarded as entitling him to the post of honour. His annoyance concerning the newspapers appears to have been caused by an article in the *Journal des Débats*, stating that Byron had formerly been intimately acquainted with the Countess. Writing on the subject, he says: "I beg leave to decline the *liaison*, which is quite untrue: my *liaison* was with the father in the unsentimental shape of long lawyer's bills, through the medium of which I have had to pay him ten or twelve thousand pounds within these few years." Byron adds: "I could not foresee that a man was to turn out mad who had gone about the world for fifty years as competent to vote and walk at large; nor did he seem to me more insane than any other person going to be married."

irritable, though he endeavoured to suppress all symptoms of it. After various sarcasms on the cant and hypocrisy of the times, which was always the signal that he was suffering from some attack made on him, he burst forth in violent invectives against America, and said that she now rivalled her mother country in cant, as he had that morning read an article of abuse, copied from an American newspaper, alluding to a report that he was going to reside there. We had seen the article, and hoped that it might have escaped his notice; but unfortunately he had perused it, and its effects on his temper were visible for several days after. He said that he was never sincere in his praises of the Americans, and that he only extolled their navy to pique Mr. Croker.* There was something so childish in this avowal, that there was no keeping a serious face on hearing it; and Byron smiled himself like a petulant spoiled child, who acknowledges having done something to spite a playfellow.

Byron is a great admirer of the poetry of Barry

* John Wilson Croker—born December 20th, 1780; died August 10th, 1857—was Secretary to the Admiralty for many years; he sat in Parliament till the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832; he was a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, and he edited several works. His edition of "Boswell's Johnson" was attacked by Macaulay in the *Edinburgh;* while he attacked the two first volumes of Macaulay's "History of England" in the *Quarterly*.

Cornwall,* which, he says, is full of imagination and beauty, possessing a refinement and delicacy, that, whilst they add all the charms of a woman's mind, take off none of the force of a man's. He expressed his hope that he would devote himself to tragedy, saying that he was sure he would become one of the first writers of the day.

Talking of marriage, Byron said that there was no real happiness out of its pale. "If people like each other so well," said he, "as not to be able to live asunder, this is the only tie that can ensure happiness—all others entail misery. I put religion and morals out of the question, though of course the misery will be increased tenfold by the influence of both; but, admitting persons to have neither (and many such are by the good-natured world supposed to exist), still *liaisons*, that are not cemented by marriage, must produce unhappiness, when there is refinement of mind, and that honourable *fierté* which accompanies it. The humiliations and vexations a woman under such circumstances is exposed to cannot fail to have a certain effect on her temper

* This is the name under which Bryan Waller Procter wrote. He was born November 21st, 1787, and died October 4th, 1874. He had produced four volumes of poems at the time Byron conversed with Lady Blessington; his "English Songs," which appeared in 1832, are more valued than his other verses. He wrote memoirs of Kean and Charles Lamb. He was called to the Bar in 1831, and he was a Metropolitan Commissioner of Lunacy from 1832 to 1861. He was the father of Adelaide Anne Procter.

and spirits, which robs her of the charms that won affection; it renders her susceptible and suspicious; her self-esteem being diminished, she becomes doubly jealous of that of him for whom she lost it, and on whom she depends; and if he has feeling to conciliate her, he must submit to a slavery much more severe than that of marriage, without its respectability.

"Women become *exigeante* always in proportion to their consciousness of a decrease in the attentions they desire, and this very *exigeance* accelerates the flight of the blind god, whose approaches, the Greek proverb says, are always made walking, but whose retreat is flying. I once wrote some lines expressive of my feelings on this subject, and you shall have them." He had no sooner repeated the first line than I recollected having the verses in my possession, having been allowed to copy them by Mr. D. Kinnaird the day he received them from Lord Byron. The following are the verses:—

"COMPOSED DECEMBER 1ST, 1819.

"Could Love for ever
Run like a river,
And Time's endeavour
Be tried in vain;
No other pleasure
With this could measure;
And as a treasure
We'd hug the chain.

But since our sighing
Ends not in dying,
And, formed for flying,
Love plumes his wing;
Then, for this reason,
Let's love a season;
But let that season be only Spring.

"When lovers parted
Feel broken-hearted,
And, all hopes thwarted,
Expect to die;
A few years older,
Ah! how much colder
They might behold her
For whom they sigh.
When link'd together,
Through every weather,
We pluck Love's feather
From out his wing,
He'll sadly shiver,
And droop for ever,
Without the plumage that sped his spring.

[*or*,

Shorn of the plumage which sped his spring.]

"Like Chiefs of Faction
His life is action,—
A formal paction,
Which curbs his reign,
Obscures his glory,
Despot no more, he
Such territory
Quits with disdain.

Still, still advancing,
With banners glancing,
His power enhancing,
He must march on :
Repose but cloys him,
Retreat destroys him ;
Love brooks not a degraded throne !

" Wait not, fond lover !
Till years are over,
And then recover
As from a dream ;
While each bewailing
The other's failing,
With wrath and railing
All hideous seem ;
While first decreasing,
Yet not quite ceasing,
Pause not till teazing
All passion blight :
If once diminish'd,
His reign is finish'd,—
One last embrace then, and bid good-night !

" So shall Affection
To recollection
The dear connexion
Bring back with joy ;
You have not waited
Till, tired and hated,
All passion sated,
Began to cloy.
Your last embraces
Leave no cold traces,—
The same fond faces
As through the past ;
And eyes, the mirrors
Of your sweet errors,
Reflect but rapture ; not least, though last !

"True separations
Ask more than patience;
What desperations
From such have risen!
And yet remaining
What is't but chaining
Hearts which, once waning,
Beat 'gainst their prison?
Time can but cloy love,
And use destroy love:
The winged boy, Love,
Is but for boys;
You'll find it torture,
Though sharper, shorter,
To wean, and not wear out your joys."

They are so unworthy the author, that they are merely given as proof that the greatest genius can sometimes write bad verses; as even Homer nods. I remarked to Byron, that the sentiment of the poem differed with that which he had just given me of marriage: he laughed, and said, "Recollect, the lines were written nearly four years ago; and we grow wiser as we grow older: but mind, I still say, that I only approve marriage when the persons are so much attached as not to be able to live asunder, which ought always to be tried by a year's absence before the irrevocable knot is formed. The truest picture of the misery unhallowed *liaisons* produce," said Byron, "is in the 'Adolphe' of Benjamin Constant.* I told Madame de Staël that there was

* Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, born October 15th, 1767, died December 10, 1830, was a Swiss by birth and a Frenchman

more *morale* in that book than in all she ever wrote; and that it ought always to be given to every young woman who had read 'Corinne,' as an antidote.

"Poor De Staël! she came down upon me like an avalanche, whenever I told her any of my amiable truths, sweeping everything before her, with that eloquence which always overwhelmed, but never convinced. She however, good soul, believed she had convinced, whenever she silenced an opponent; an effect she generally produced, as she, to use an Irish phrase, succeeded in *bothering*, and producing a confusion of ideas that left one little able or willing to continue an argument with her. I liked her daughter very much," said Byron: "I wonder will she turn out literary?—at all events, though she may not write, she possesses the power of judging the writings of others; is highly educated and clever; but I thought a little given to systems, which is not in general the fault of young women, and, above all, young French women."*

by naturalization. He achieved fame as a Parliamentary orator. Among his many writings, his work of "Adolphe" is now the best known, and it has always been the most admired. It is supposed to contain particulars of his own life. He was one of Madame de Staël's special favourites, and she was thought to be the heroine of the romance; but, according to M. de Lomérie, the lady who figures under the name of Eléonore was Mrs. Lindsey.

* Madame de Staël, born April 22nd, 1766, died July 14th, 1817, was the most brilliant Frenchwoman of her time. Her

One day that Byron dined with us, his chasseur, while we were at table, demanded to speak with him : he left the room, and returned in a few minutes in a state of violent agitation, pale with anger, and looking as I had never before seen him look, though I had often seen him angry. He told us that his servant had come to tell him that he must pass the gate of Genoa (his house being outside the town) before half-past ten o'clock, as orders were given that no one was to be allowed to pass after. This order, which had no personal reference to him, he conceived to be expressly levelled at him, and it rendered him furious : he seized a pen, and commenced a letter to our minister,—tore two or three letters one after the other, before he had written one to his satisfaction; and, in short, betrayed such ungovernable rage, as to astonish all who were present : he seemed very much disposed to enter into a personal contest with the authorities ; and we had some difficulty in persuading him to leave the business wholly in the hands of Mr. Hill, the English Minister, who would arrange it much better.

Byron's appearance and conduct, on this occasion, forcibly reminded me of the description given of Rousseau : he declared himself the victim

daughter Albertine, who did not "turn out literary," became the wife of the Duc de Broglie in February, 1816.

of persecution wherever he went ; said that there was a confederacy between all governments to pursue and molest him, and uttered a thousand extravagances, which proved that he was no longer master of himself. I now understood how likely his manner was, under any violent excitement, to give rise to the idea that he was deranged in his intellects, and became convinced of the truth of the sentiment in the lines—

> "Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
> And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

The next day, when we met, Byron said that he had received a satisfactory explanation from Mr. Hill, and then asked me if I had not thought him mad the night before:—"I assure you," said he, "I often think myself not in my right senses, and this is perhaps the only opinion I have in common with Lady Byron, who, dear sensible soul, not only thought me mad, but tried to persuade others into the same belief."

Talking one day on the difference between men's actions and thoughts, a subject to which he often referred, he observed, that it frequently happened that a man who was capable of superior powers of reflection and reasoning when alone, was trifling and common-place in society. "On this point," said he, "I speak feelingly, for I have remarked it of myself, and have often longed

to know if other people had the same defect, or the same consciousness of it, which is, that while in solitude my mind was occupied in serious and elevated reflections, in society it sinks into a trifling levity of tone, that in another would have called forth my disapprobation and disgust. Another defect of mine is, that I am so little fastidious in the selection, or rather want of selection, of associates, that the most stupid men satisfy me quite as well, nay, perhaps better than the most brilliant; and yet all the time they are with me I feel, even while descending to their level, that they are unworthy of me, and what is worse, that we seem in point of conversation so nearly on an equality, that the effort of letting myself down to them costs me nothing, though my pride is hurt that they do not seem more sensible of the condescension. When I have sought what is called good society, it was more from a sense of propriety and keeping my station in the world, than from any pleasure it gave me, for I have been always disappointed, even in the most brilliant and clever of my acquaintances, by discovering some trait of egoism, or futility, that I was too egoistical and futile to pardon, as I find that we are least disposed to overlook the defects we are most prone to. Do you think as I do on this point?" said Byron.

I answered, "That as a clear and spotless

mirror reflects the brightest images, so is goodness ever most prone to see good in others; and as a sullied mirror shows its own defects in all that it reflects, so does an impure mind tinge all that passes through it." Byron laughingly said, "That thought of yours is pretty, and just, which all pretty thoughts are not, and I shall pop it into my next poem. But how do you account for this tendency of mine to trifling and levity in conversation, when in solitude my mind is really occupied in serious reflections?" I answered, "That this was the very cause—the bow cannot remain always bent; the thoughts suggested to him in society were the reaction of a mind strained to its bent, and reposing itself after exertion; as also that feeling the inferiority of the persons he mixed with, the great powers were not excited, but lay dormant and supine, collecting their force for solitude." This opinion pleased him, and when I added that great writers were rarely good talkers, and *vice versâ*, he was still more gratified.

He said that he disliked every-day topics of conversation; he thought it a waste of time; but that if he met a person with whom he could, as he said, think aloud, and give utterance to his thoughts on abstract subjects, he was sure it would excite the energies of his mind, and awaken sleeping thoughts that wanted to be

stirred up. "I like to go home with a new idea," said Byron; "it sets my mind to work; I enlarge it, and it often gives birth to many others; this one can only do in a *tête-à-tête*. I felt the advantage of this in my rides with Hoppner* at Venice; he was a good listener, and his remarks were acute and original; he is besides a thoroughly good man, and I knew he was in earnest when he gave me his opinions. But conversation, such as one finds in society, and, above all, in English society, is as uninteresting as it is artificial, and few can leave the best with the consolation of carrying away with him a new thought, or of leaving behind him an old friend." Here he laughed at his own antithesis, and added, "By Jove, it is true; you know how people abuse or quiz each other in England, the moment one is absent: each is afraid to go away before the other, knowing that, as is said in the 'School for Scandal,' he leaves his character behind. It is this certainty that excuses me to myself, for abusing my friends and acquaintances in their absence.

"I was once accused of this by an *ami intime*, to whom some devilish good-natured person had repeated what I had said of him; I had nothing for it but to plead guilty, adding, 'you know you have done the same by me fifty times, and

* The English Consul-General.

yet you see I never was affronted, or liked you less for it;' on which he laughed, and we were as good friends as ever. Mind you (a favourite phrase of Byron's) I never heard that he had abused me, but I took it for granted, and was right. So much for friends."

I remarked to Byron that his scepticism as to the sincerity and durability of friendship argued very much against his capability of feeling the sentiment, especially as he admitted that he had not been deceived by the *few* he had confided in, consequently his opinion must be founded on *self*-knowledge. This amused him, and he said that he verily believed that his knowledge of human nature, on which he had hitherto prided himself, was the criterion by which I judged so unfavourably of him, as he was sure I attributed his bad opinion of mankind to his perfect knowledge of *self*. When in good spirits, he liked badinage very much, and nothing seemed to please him more than being considered as a *mauvais sujet*: he disclaimed the being so with an air that showed he was far from being offended at the suspicion.

Of love he had strange notions: he said that most people had *le besoin d'aimer*, and that with this *besoin* the first person who fell in one's way contented one. He maintained that those who possessed the most imagination — poets, for

example—were most likely to be constant in their attachments, as with the *beau idéal* in their heads, with which they identified the object of their attachment, they had nothing to desire, and viewed their mistresses through the brilliant medium of fancy, instead of the common one of the eyes. "A poet, therefore," said Byron, "endows the person he loves with all the charms with which his mind is stored, and has no need of actual beauty to fill up the picture. Hence he should select a woman who is rather good-looking than beautiful, leaving the latter for those who, having no imagination, require actual beauty to satisfy their tastes. And after all," said he, "where is the actual beauty that can come up to the bright 'imaginings' of the poet? where can one see women that equal the visions, half-mortal, half-angelic, that people his fancy?

"Love, who is painted blind (an allegory that proves the uselessness of beauty), can supply all deficiencies with his aid; we can invest her whom we admire with all the attributes of loveliness, and though time may steal the roses from her cheek, and the lustre from her eye, still the original *beau idéal* remains, filling the mind and intoxicating the soul with the overpowering presence of loveliness. I flatter myself that my Leila, Zuleika, Gulnare, Medora, and Haidée will always vouch for my taste in beauty: these

are the bright creations of my fancy, with rounded forms, and delicacy of limbs, nearly so incompatible as to be rarely, if ever, united; for where, with some rare exceptions, do we see roundness of *contour* accompanied by lightness, and those fairy hands and feet that are at once the type of beauty and refinement. I like to shut myself up, close my eyes, and fancy one of the creatures of my imagination, with taper and rose-tipped fingers, playing with my hair, touching my cheek, or resting its little snowy dimpled hand on mine. I like to fancy the fairy foot, round and pulpy, but small to diminutiveness, peeping from beneath the drapery that half conceals it, or moving in the mazes of the dance. I detest thin women; and unfortunately all, or nearly all plump women, have clumsy hands and feet, so that I am obliged to have recourse to imagination for my beauties, and there I always find them.

"I can so well understand the lover leaving his mistress that he might write to her,—I should leave mine, not to write to, but to think of her, to dress her up in the habiliments of my ideal beauty, investing her with all the charms of the latter, and then adoring the idol I had formed. You must have observed that I give my heroines extreme refinement, joined to great simplicity and want of education. Now, refinement and want of education are incompatible, at least I have

ever found them so : so here again, you see, I am forced to have recourse to imagination ; and certainly it furnishes me with creatures as unlike the sophisticated beings of civilized existence, as they are to the still less tempting, coarse realities of vulgar life. In short, I am of opinion that poets do not require great beauty in the objects of their affection ; all that is necessary for them is a strong and devoted attachment from the object, and where this exists, joined to health and good temper, little more is required, at least in early youth, though with advancing years men become more *exigeants*." Talking of the difference between love in early youth and in maturity, Byron said, "that, like the measles, love was most dangerous when it came late in life."

Byron had two points of ambition,—the one to be thought the greatest poet of his day, and the other a nobleman and man of fashion, who could have arrived at distinction without the aid of his poetical genius. This often produced curious anomalies in his conduct and sentiments, and a sort of jealousy of himself in each separate character, that was highly amusing to an observant spectator.

If poets were talked of or eulogized, he referred to the advantages of rank and station as commanding that place in society by right, which

was only accorded to genius by sufferance; for, said Byron, "Let authors do, say, or think what they please, they are never considered as men of fashion in the circles of *haut ton*, to which their literary reputations have given them an *entrée*, unless they happen to be of high birth. How many times have I observed this in London; as also the awkward efforts made by authors to trifle and act the fine gentleman like the rest of the herd in society. Then look at the *faiblesse* they betray in running after great people. Lords and ladies seem to possess, in their eyes, some power of attraction that I never could discover; and the eagerness with which they crowd to balls and assemblies, where they are as *déplacés* as *ennuyés*, all conversation at such places being out of the question, might lead one to think that they sought the heated atmospheres of such scenes as hot-beds to nurse their genius."

If men of fashion were praised, Byron dwelt on the futility of their pursuits, their ignorance *en masse*, and the necessity of talents to give lustre to rank and station. In short, he seemed to think that the bays of the author ought to be entwined with a coronet to render either valuable, as, singly, they were not sufficiently attractive; and this evidently arose from *his* uniting, in his own person, rank and genius. I recollect once laughingly telling him that he was fortunate in being

able to consider himself a poet amongst lords, and a lord amongst poets. He seemed doubtful as to how he should take the parody, but ended by laughing also.

Byron has often laughed at some *repartie* or joke against himself, and, after a few minutes' reflection, got angry at it; but was always soon appeased by a civil apology, though it was clear that he disliked anything like ridicule, as do most people who are addicted to play it off on others; and he certainly delighted in quizzing and ridiculing his associates. The translation of his works into different languages, however it might have flattered his *amour propre* as an author, never failed to enrage him, from the injustice he considered all translations rendered to his works. I have seen him furious at some passages in the French translation, which he pointed out as proof of the impossibility of the translators understanding the original, and he exclaimed, "*Il traditore! Il traditore!*" (instead of *Il traduttore!*) vowing vengeance against the unhappy traducers, as he called them. He declared that every translation he had seen of his poems had so destroyed the sense, that he could not understand how the French and Italians could admire his works, as they professed to do. It proved, he said, at how low an ebb modern poetry must be in both countries. French poetry

he detested, and continually ridiculed : he said it was discordant to his ears.

Of his own works, with some exceptions, he always spoke in derision, saying he could write much better, but that he wrote to suit the false taste of the day; and that if now and then a gleam of true feeling or poetry was visible in his productions, it was sure to be followed by the ridicule he could not suppress. Byron was not sincere in this, and it was only said to excite surprise, and show his superiority over the rest of the world. It was the same desire of astonishing people that led him to depreciate Shakespeare, which I have frequently heard him do, though from various reflections of his in conversation, and the general turn of his mind, I am convinced that he had not only deeply read, but deeply felt the beauties of our immortal poet.

CHAPTER VII.

Byron's friends—Sir John Hobhouse—William Bankes—Joseph Jekyll—"The Tears of the Cruets"—John Philpot Curran—An inimitable mimic—An ode to memory—Definitions of memory—One more cardinal virtue—"The Pleasures of Fear"—Dreams—English and Italian characteristics—Byron as comic writer—Pietro Gamba—John William Ward, Lord Dudley—Sheridan—William Arden, second Lord Alvanley and successor to Beau Brummel.

I do not recollect ever having met Byron that he did not, in some way or other, introduce the subject of Lady Byron. The impression left on my mind was, that she continually occupied his thoughts, and that he most anxiously desired a reconciliation with her. He declared that his marriage was free from every interested motive; and if not founded on love, as love is generally viewed, a wild, engrossing and ungovernable passion, there was quite sufficient liking in it to have insured happiness had his temper been better.

He said that Lady Byron's appearance had pleased him from the first moment, and had always continued to please him; and that, had

his pecuniary affairs been in a less ruinous state, his temper would not have been excited, as it daily, hourly was, during the brief period of their union, by the demands of insolent creditors whom he was unable to satisfy, and who drove him nearly out of his senses, until he lost all command of himself, and so forfeited Lady Byron's affection. "I must admit," said he, "that I could not have left a very agreeable impression on her mind. With my irascible temper, worked upon by the constant attacks of duns, no wonder that I became gloomy, violent, and, I fear, often personally uncivil, if no worse, and so disgusted her; though, had she really loved me, she would have borne with my infirmities, and made allowance for my provocations. I have written to her repeatedly, and am still in the habit of writing long letters to her, many of which I have sent, but without ever receiving an answer, and others that I did not send, because I despaired of their doing any good. I will show you some of them, as they may serve to throw a light on my feelings."

The next day Byron sent me the letter addressed to Lady Byron, which has already appeared in "Moore's Life."* He never could divest himself of the idea that she took a deep interest in him; he said that their child must

* Vol. vi., p. 30, edition 1832.

always be a bond of union between them, whatever lapse of years or distance might separate them; and this idea seemed to comfort him. And yet, notwithstanding the bond of union a child was supposed to form between the parents, he did not hesitate to state, to the gentlemen of our party, his more than indifference towards the mother* of his illegitimate daughter.

Byron's mental courage was much stronger in his study than in society. In moments of inspiration, with his pen in his hand, he would have dared public opinion, and laughed to scorn the criticisms of all the *litterati*, but with reflection came doubts and misgivings; and though in general he was tenacious in not changing what he had once written, this tenacity proceeded more from the fear of being thought to *want* mental courage than from the existence of the quality itself. This operated also on his actions as well as his writings; he was the creature of impulse; never reflected on the possible or probable results of his conduct, until that conduct had drawn down censure and calumny on him, when he shrunk with dismay, "frightened at the sounds himself had made."

* Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, step-daughter of William Godwin, born April 27, 1798, died March 19, 1879. Her daughter Allegra, of whom Byron was the father, was born January 12, 1817, and died April 19, 1822.

This sensitiveness was visible on all occasions, and extended to all his relations with others: did his friends or associates become the objects of public attack, he shrunk from the association, or at least from any public display of it, disclaimed the existence of any particular intimacy, though in secret he felt good-will to the persons. I have witnessed many examples of this, and became convinced that his friendship was much more likely to be retained by those who stood well in the world's opinion, than by those who had even undeservedly forfeited it.

I once made an observation to him on this point, which was elicited by something he had said of persons with whom I knew he had once been on terms of intimacy, and which he wished to disclaim: his reply was, "What the deuce good can I do them against public opinion? I shall only injure myself, and do them no service." I ventured to tell him, that this was precisely the system of the English whom he decried; and that self-respect, if no better feeling operated, ought to make us support in adversity those whom we had led to believe we felt interested in. He blushed, and allowed I was right; "though," added he, "you are *singular* in both senses of the word, in your opinion, as I have had proofs; for at the moment when I was assailed *by all* the vituperation of the Press in England at the

separation, a friend of mine, who had written a complimentary passage to me, either by way of dedication or episode (I forget which he said), suppressed it on finding public opinion running hard against me: he will probably produce it if he finds the quicksilver of the barometer of my reputation mounts to *beau fixe;* while it remains, as at present, at variable, it will never see the light, save and except I die in Greece, with a sort of demi-poetic and demi-heroic *renommée* attached to my memory."

Whenever Byron found himself in a difficulty, —and the occasions were frequent,—he had recourse to the example of others, which induced me to tell him that few people had so much profited by friends as he had; they always served "to point a moral and adorn a tale," being his illustrations for all the errors to which human nature is heir, and his apologetic examples whenever he wished to find an excuse for unpoetical acts of worldly wisdom. Byron rather encouraged than discouraged such observations; he said they had novelty to recommend them, and has even wilfully provoked their recurrence. Whenever I gave him my opinions, and still oftener when one of the party, whose sentiments partook of all the chivalric honour, delicacy, and generosity of the *beau idéal* of the poetic character, expressed his, Byron used to say,

"Now for a Utopian system of the good and beautiful united; Lord B. ought to have lived in the heroic ages, and if all mankind would agree to act as *he* feels and acts, I agree with you we should all be certainly better, and, I do believe, happier than at present; but it would surely be absurd for a few—and to how few would it be limited—to set themselves up 'doing as they would be done by,' against a million who invariably act *vice versâ*. No; if goodness is to become *à-la-mode*,—and I sincerely wish it were possible,—we must have a fair start, and all begin at the same time, otherwise it will be like exposing a few naked unarmed men against a multitude in armour."

Byron was never *de bonne foi* in giving such opinions; indeed, the whole of his manner betrayed this, as it was playful and full of *plaisanterie*, but still he wanted the accompaniment of habitual acts of disinterested generosity to convince one that his practice was better than his theory. He was one of the many whose lives prove how much more effect *example* has than precept. All the elements of good were combined in his nature, but they lay dormant for want of emulation to excite their activity. He was the slave of his passions, and he submitted not without violent, though, alas! unsuccessful, struggles to the chains they imposed; but each

day brought him nearer to that age when reason triumphs over passion—when, had life been spared him, he would have subjugated those unworthy tyrants, and asserted his empire over that most rebellious of all dominions—self.

Byron never wished to live to be old; on the contrary, I have frequently heard him express the hope of dying young; and I remember his quoting Sir William Temple's opinion,—that life is like wine; who would drink it pure must not draw it to the dregs,—as being his way of thinking also. He said, it was a mistaken idea that passions subsided with age, as they only changed, and not for the better, Avarice usurping the place vacated by Love, and Suspicion filling up that of Confidence. "And this," continued Byron, "is what age and experience bring us. No; let me not live to be old: give me youth, which is the fever of reason, and not age, which is the palsy. I remember my youth, when my heart overflowed with affection towards all who showed any symptom of liking towards me; and now, at thirty-six, no very advanced period of life, I can scarcely, by raking up the dying embers of affection in that same heart, excite even a temporary flame to warm my chilled feelings."

Byron mourned over the lost feelings of his youth, as we regret the lost friends of the same happy period; there was something melancholy

in the sentiment, and the more so, as one saw that it was sincere. He often talked of death, and never with dread. He said that its certainty furnished a better lesson than all the philosophy of the schools, as it enabled us to bear the ills of life, which would be unbearable were life of unlimited duration. He quoted Cowley's lines—

> "O Life! thou weak-built isthmus, which doth proudly rise
> Up betwixt two eternities!"

as an admirable description, and said they often recurred to his memory.*

He never mentioned the friends of whom Death had deprived him without visible emotion: he loved to dwell on their merits, and talked of them with a tenderness as if their deaths had been recent, instead of years ago. Talking of some of them, and deploring their loss, he observed, with a bitter smile, "But perhaps it is as well that they are gone: it is less bitter to mourn their deaths than to have to regret their alienation; and who knows but that, had they lived, they might have become as faithless as some others that I have known. Experience has

* Moore's lines in "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan" are more familiar, and they may have been inspired by Cowley. Life is depicted as:

> "This narrow isthmus 'twixt two boundless seas,
> The past, the future, two eternities."

taught me that the only friends that we can call our own—that can know no change—are those over whom the grave has closed: the seal of death is the only seal of friendship. No wonder, then, that we cherish the memory of those who loved us, and comfort ourselves with the thought that they were unchanged to the last. The regret we feel at such afflictions has something in it that softens our hearts, and renders us better. We feel more kindly disposed to our fellow-creatures, because we are satisfied with ourselves —first, for being able to excite affection, and, secondly, for the gratitude with which we repay it,—to the memory of those we have lost; but the regret we prove at the alienation or unkindness of those we trusted and loved, is so mingled with bitter feelings, that they sear the heart, dry up the fountain of kindness in our breasts, and disgust us with human nature, by wounding our self-love in its most vulnerable part—showing that we have failed to excite affection where we had lavished ours. One may learn to bear this uncomplainingly, and with outward calm; but the impression is indelible, and he must be made of different materials from the generality of men, who does not become a cynic, if he become nothing worse, after once suffering such a disappointment."

I remarked that his early friends had not given

him cause to speak feelingly on this subject, and named Mr. Hobhouse* as a proof: he answered, "Yes, certainly, he has remained unchanged, and I believe is unchangeable; and, if friendship, as most people imagine, consists in telling one truth —unvarnished, unadorned truth—he is indeed a friend; yet, hang it, I must be candid, and say I have had many other, and more agreeable, proofs of Hobhouse's friendship than the truths he always told me; but the fact is, I wanted him to sugar them over a little with flattery, as nurses do the physic given to children; and he never would, and therefore I have never felt quite content with him, though, *au fond*, I respect him the more for his candour, while I respect myself very much less for my weakness in disliking it.

"William Bankes† is another of my early friends. He is very clever, very original, and has a fund of information: he is also very good-

* Sir John Cam Hobhouse, born in 1786, was the author of poems and translations published in 1809, and of a "Journey through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey," with Byron, which went through several editions, the first appearing in 1812. His third work, "The Last Reign of Napoleon," appeared in 1816; and his fourth, "Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold," in 1818. He was raised to the peerage as Baron Broughton in 1851. The title died with him in 1869.

† In a letter to Murray from Ravenna, Byron writes that at Cambridge "Bankes was my collegiate pastor, and master, and patron," and that he "was good-naturedly tolerant of my ferocities."

natured; but he is not much of a flatterer. How unjust it is to accuse you ladies of loving flattery so much; I am sure that we men are quite as much addicted to it, but have not the amiable candour to show it, as you all do. Adulation is never disagreeable when addressed to ourselves, though let us hear only half the same degree of it addressed to another, and we vote the addresser a parasite, and the addressed a fool for swallowing it. But even though we may doubt the sincerity of the judgment of the adulator, the incense is nevertheless acceptable, as it proves we must be of some importance to induce him to take the trouble of flattering us. There are two things that we are all willing to take, and never think we can have too much of (continued Byron)—money and flattery; and the more we have of the *first*, the more we are likely to get of the second, as far as I have observed, at all events in England, where I have seen wealth excite an attention and respect that virtue, genius, or valour would fail to meet with."

"I have frequently remarked (said Byron), that in no country have I seen *pre-eminence* so universally followed by envy, jealousy, and all uncharitableness, as in England; those who are deterred by shame from openly attacking, endeavour to depreciate it, by holding up mediocrity to admiration, on the same principle that women,

when they hear the beauty of another justly extolled, either deny, or assent with faint praise to her claims, and lavish on some merely passable woman the highest encomiums, to prove they are not envious. The English treat their celebrated men as they do their climate, abuse them amongst themselves, and defend them out of *amour-propre*, if attacked by strangers.

"Did you ever know a person of powerful abilities really liked in England? Are not the persons most popular in society precisely those who have no qualities to excite envy? Amiable, good-natured people, but negative characters; their very goodness (if mere good-nature can be called goodness) being caused by the want of any positive excellence, as white is produced by the absence of colour. People feel themselves equal, and generally think themselves superior to such persons; hence, as they cannot wound vanity, they become popular; all agree to praise them, because *each* individual, while praising, administers to his own self-complacency, from his belief of superiority to him whom he praises.

"Notwithstanding their faults, the English, (said Byron,) that is to say, the well bred and well educated among them, are better calculated for the commerce of society than the individuals of other countries, from the simple circumstance that they *listen*. This makes one cautious of

what one says, and prevents the hazarding the *mille petits riens* that escape when one takes courage from the noise of all talking together, as in other places; and this is a great point gained.

"In what country but England could the epigrammatic repartees and *spirituel* anecdotes of a Jekyll* have flourished? Place him at a French or Italian table, supposing him *au fait* of the languages, and this, our English Attic bee, could neither display his honey nor his sting; both would be useless in the hive of drones around him. St. Evremond, I think it is, who says that there is no better company than an Englishman who talks, and a Frenchman who thinks; but give me the man who *listens*, unless he can talk like a Jekyll, from the overflowing of a full mind, and not, as most of one's acquaintances do, make a noise like drums, from their emptiness.

"An animated conversation has much the same effect on me as champagne—it elevates and makes me giddy, and I say a thousand

* Joseph Jekyll, born 1753, died 1837, was a member of the Bar, who was more celebrated as a story-teller than a lawyer. He was a favourite of the Prince Regent, to whose influence with Lord Eldon he owed the appointments first of a Commissioner in Lunacy, and second of a Master in Chancery. He wrote humorous verses on topics of the day, the best being the *Tears of the Cruets*, when Pitt laid a tax on salt.

foolish things while under its intoxicating influence : it takes a long time to sober me after ; and I sink, under reaction, into a state of depression—half cross, half hippish, and out of humour with myself and the world. I find an interesting book the only sedative to restore me to my wonted calm ; for, left alone to my own reflections, I feel so ashamed of myself—*vis-à-vis* to myself—for my levity and over-excitement, that all the follies I have uttered rise up in judgment against me, and I am as sheepish as a schoolboy, after his first degrading abandonment to intemperance."

" Did you know Curran ?* (asked Byron)—he was the most wonderful person I ever saw. In him was combined an imagination the most brilliant and profound, with a flexibility and wit that would have justified the observation applied to ——, that his heart was in his head. I remember his once repeating some stanzas to me, four lines of which struck me so much, that I made him repeat them twice, and I wrote them down before I went to bed :

* John Philpot Curran, born July 24th, 1750, died October 14th, 1817, was a distinguished Irish politician, orator and lawyer. Byron wrote to Moore in 1813 : " I have met Curran at Holland House —he beats everybody ; his imagination is beyond human, and his wit (it is difficult to define what is wit) perfect. Then he has fifty faces and twice as many voices when he mimics—I never met his equal."

" ' While Memory, with more than Egypt's art
Embalming all the sorrows of the heart,
Sits at the altar which she raised to woe,
And feeds the source whence tears eternal flow !'

I have caught myself repeating these lines fifty times ; and, strange to say, they suggested an image on memory to me, with which they have no sort of resemblance in any way, and yet the idea came while repeating them ; so unaccountable and incomprehensible is the power of association. My thought was—Memory, the mirror which affliction dashes to the earth, and, looking down upon the fragments, only beholds the reflection multiplied." He seemed pleased at my admiring his idea.* I told him that his thoughts, in comparison with those of others, were eagles brought into competition with sparrows. As an example, I gave him my definition of Memory, which I said resembled a telescope bringing distant objects near to us. He said the simile was good ; but I added it was mechanical, instead of poetical, which constituted the difference between excellence and mediocrity, as between the eagle and sparrow. This amused him, though his politeness refused to admit the verity of the comparison.

* " E'en as a broken mirror which the glass
In every fragment multiplies, and makes
A thousand images of one that was," etc.
Childe Harold, Canto iii., St. 33.

Talking of tact, Byron observed that it ought to be added to the catalogue of the cardinal virtues, and that our happiness frequently depended more on it than all the accredited ones. "A man (said he) may have prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude: yet wanting tact may, and must, render those around him *uncomfortable* (the English synonym for unhappy); and, by the never-failing retributive justice of Nemesis, be unhappy himself, as all are who make others so. I consider tact the real *panacea* of life, and have observed that those who most eminently possessed it were remarkable for feeling and sentiment; while, on the contrary, the persons most deficient in it were obtuse, frivolous, or insensible. To possess tact it is necessary to have a fine perception, and to be sensitive; for how can we know what will pain another without having some criterion in our own feelings, by which we can judge of his? Hence, I maintain that our tact is always in proportion to our sensibility."

Talking of love and friendship, Byron said, that "friendship may, and often does, grow into love, but love never subsides into friendship." I maintained the contrary, and instanced the affectionate friendship which replaces the love of married people; a sentiment as tender, though less passionate, and more durable than the first.

He said, "You should say more *enduring*; for, depend on it, that the good-natured passiveness, with which people submit to the conjugal yoke, is much more founded on the philosophical principle of what can't be cured must be endured, than the tender friendship you give them credit for. Who that has felt the all-engrossing passion of love (continued he) could support the stagnant calm you refer to for the same object? No, the humiliation of discovering the frailty of our own nature, which is in no instance more proved than by the short duration of violent love, has something so painful in it, that, with our usual selfishness, we feel, if not a repugnance, at least an indifference to the object that once charmed, but can no longer charm us, and whose presence brings mortifying recollections; nay, such is our injustice, that we transfer the blame of the weakness of our own natures to the person who had not power to retain our love, and discover blemishes in her to excuse our inconstancy. As indifference begets indifference, vanity is wounded at both sides; and though good sense may induce people to support and conceal their feelings, how can an affectionate friendship spring up like a phœnix, from the ashes of extinguished passion? I am afraid that the friendship, in such a case, would be as fabulous as the phœnix, for the recollection of burnt-out love would remain too

mortifying a memento to admit the successor, friendship."

I told Byron that this was mere sophistry, and could not be his real sentiments; as also that, a few days before, he admitted that passion subsides into a better, or at least a more durable feeling. I added, that persons who had felt the engrossing love he described, which was a tempestuous and selfish passion, were glad to sink into the refreshing calm of milder feelings, and looked back with complacency on the storms they had been exposed to, and with increased sympathy to the person who had shared them. The community of interest, of sorrows, and of joys added new links to the chain of affection, and habit, which might wear away the gloss of the selfish passion he alluded to, gave force to friendship, by rendering the persons every day more necessary to each other. I added, that dreadful would be the fate of persons, if, after a few months of violent passion, they were to pass their lives in indifference, merely because their new feelings were less engrossing and exciting than the old.

"Then (said Byron), if you admit that the violent love does, or must, subside in a few months, and, as in coursing, that we are mad for a minute to be melancholy for an hour, would it not be wiser to choose the friend, I mean the person most calculated for friendship, with whom

the long years are to be spent, than the idol who is to be worshipped for some months, and then hurled from the altar we had raised to her, and left defaced and disfigured by the smoke of the incense she had received?" I maintained that as the idols are chosen nearly always for their personal charms, they are seldom calculated for friendship; hence the disappointment that ensues, when the violence of passion has abated, and the discovery is made that there are no solid qualities to replace the passion that has passed away with the novelty that excited it. "When a man (answered Byron) chooses a friend in a woman, he looks to her powers of conversation, her mental qualities, and agreeability; and as these win his regard the more they are known, love often takes the place of friendship, and certainly the foundation on which he builds is more likely to be lasting; and, in this case, I admit that affection, or, as you more prettily call it, tender friendship, may last for ever."

I replied that I believe the only difference in our opinions is, that I denied that friendship could not succeed love, and that nothing could change my opinion. "I suppose (said Byron) that a woman, like

> "'A man, convinced against his will
> Is of the same opinion still—'*

* "He that complies against his will
Is of his own opinion still."
Hudibras, Part III., canto iii.

so that all my fine commentaries on my text have been useless; at all events I hope you give me credit for being *ingenious*, as well as *ingenuous* in my defence. Clever men (said Byron) commit a great mistake in selecting wives who are destitute of abilities; I allow that *une femme savante* is apt to be a bore, and it is to avoid this that people run into the opposite extreme, and condemn themselves to pass their lives with women who are incapable of understanding or appreciating them.

"Men have an idea that a clever woman must be disputative and dictatorial, not considering that it is only pretenders who are either, and that this applies as much to one sex as the other. Now, my *beau idéal* would be a woman with talent enough to be able to understand and value mine, but not sufficient to be able to shine herself. All men with pretensions desire this, though few, if any, have courage to avow it: I believe the truth is, that a man must be very conscious of superior abilities to endure the thought of having a rival near the throne, though that rival was his wife; and as it is said that no man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre, it may be concluded that few men can retain their position on the pedestal of genius *vis-à-vis* to one who has been behind the curtain, unless that one is unskilled in the art of judging, and consequently admires

the more because she does not understand. Genius, like greatness, should be seen at a distance, for neither will bear a too close inspection. Imagine the hero of a hundred fights in his cotton night-cap, subject to all the infirmities of human nature, and there is an end of his sublimity,—and see a poet whose works have raised our thoughts above this sphere of common everyday existence, and who, Prometheus-like, has stolen fire from heaven to animate the children of clay,—see him in the throes of poetic labour, blotting, tearing, rewriting the lines that we suppose him to have poured forth with Homeric inspiration, and, in the intervals, eating, drinking and sleeping, like the most ordinary mortal, and he soon sinks to a level with them in our estimation.

"I am sure (said Byron) we can never justly appreciate the works of those with whom we have lived on familiar terms. I have felt this myself, and it applies to poets more than all other writers. They should live in solitude, rendering their presence more desired by its rarity; never submit to the gratification of the animal appetite of eating in company, and be as distinct in their general habits, as in their genius, from the common herd of mankind."

He laughed heartily when he had finished this speech, and added, "I have had serious

thoughts of drawing up a little code of instructions for my brethren of the craft. I don't think my friend Moore would adopt it, and he, perhaps, is the only exception who would be privileged to adhere to his present régime, as he can certainly pass the ordeal of dinners without losing any of his poetical reputation, since the brilliant things that come from his lips reconcile one to the solid things that go into them."

"We have had 'Pleasures of Hope,' 'Pleasures of Memory,' 'Pleasures of Imagination,' and 'Pleasures of Love.' I wonder that no one has thought of writing Pleasures of Fear (said Byron). It surely is a poetical subject, and much might be made of it in good hands." I answered, "Why do you not undertake it?" He replied, "Why, I have endeavoured through life to make believe that I am unacquainted with the passion, so I must not now show an intimacy with it, lest I be accused of cowardice, which is, I believe, the only charge that has not yet been brought against me. But, joking apart, it would be a fine subject, and has more of the true sublime than any of the other passions.

"I have always found more difficulty in hitting on a subject than in filling it up, and so I dare say do most people; and I have remarked that I never could make much of a subject suggested to me by another. I have sometimes dreamt of

subjects and incidents (continued he), nay nearly filled up an outline of a tale while under the influence of sleep, but have found it too wild to work up into anything. Dreams are strange things; and here, again, is one of the incomprehensibilities of nature. I could tell you extraordinary things of dreams, and as true as extraordinary, but you would laugh at my superstition. Mine are always troubled and disagreeable; and one of the most fearful thoughts that ever crossed my mind during moments of gloomy scepticism, has been the possibility that the *last* sleep may not be dreamless. Fancy an endless dream of horror —it is too dreadful to think of—this thought alone would lead the veriest clod of animated clay that ever existed to aspirations after immortality.

"The difference between a religious and irreligious man (said Byron) is, that the one sacrifices the present to the future; and the other, the future to the present." I observed, that grovelling must be the mind that can content itself with the *present;* even those who are occupied only with their pleasures find the insufficiency of it, and must have something to look forward to in the morrow of the future, so unsatisfying is the to-day of the present! Byron said that he agreed with me, and added, "The belief in the immortality of the soul is the only true panacea for the ills of life."

"You will like the Italian women (said Byron), and I advise you to cultivate their acquaintance. They are natural, frank, and good-natured, and have none of the affectation, *petitesse*, jealousy and malice, that characterize our more polished countrywomen. This gives a raciness to their ideas as well as manners, that to me is peculiarly pleasing; and I feel with an Italian woman as if she were a full-grown child, possessing the buoyancy and playfulness of infancy with the deep feeling of womanhood; none of that conventional *maniérisme* that one meets with from the first patrician circles in England, justly styled the marble age, so cold and polished, to the second and third coteries, where a coarse caricature is given of the unpenetrated and *impenetrable* mysteries of the *first*.

"Where dulness, supported by the *many*, silences talent and originality, upheld by the few, Madame de Staël used to say, that our great balls and assemblies of hundreds in London, to which all flocked, were admirably calculated to reduce all to the same level, and were got up with this intention. In the torrid zone of suffocating hundreds, mediocrity and excellence had equal chances, for neither could be remarked or distinguished; conversation was impracticable, reflection put *hors de combat*, and common sense, by universal accord, sent to Coventry; so that

after a season in London one doubted one's own identity, and was tempted to repeat the lines in the child's book, 'If I be not I, who can I be?' So completely were one's faculties reduced to the conventional standard.

"The Italians know not this artificial state of society; their circles are limited and social; they love or hate; but then they 'do their hating gently'; the clever among them are allowed a distinguished place; the less endowed admires, instead of depreciating, what he cannot attain; and all and each contribute to the general stock of happiness. Misanthropy is unknown in Italy, as are many of the other exotic passions, forced into flower by the hot-beds of civilization; and yet in *moral* England you will hear people express their horror of the freedom and immorality of the Italians, whose errors are but as the weeds that a too warm sun brings forth, while ours are the stinging-nettles of a soil rendered rank by its too great richness.

"Nature is all-powerful in Italy, and who is it that would not prefer the sins of her exuberance to the crimes of art? Lay aside ceremony, and meet them with their own warmth and frankness, and I answer for it you will leave those whom you sought as acquaintances, friends, instead of, as in England, scarcely retaining as acquaintances those with whom you had started in life as

friends. Who ever saw in Italy the nearest and dearest relations bursting asunder all the ties of consanguinity, from some worldly and interested motive? And yet this so frequently takes place in England, that, after an absence of a year or two, one dare hardly enquire of a sister after a sister, or a brother after a brother, as one is afraid to be told—not that they are dead—but that they have cut each other."

"I ought to be an excellent comic writer (said Byron), if it be true, as some assert, that melancholy people succeed best in comedy, and gay people in tragedy; and Moore would make, by that rule, a first-rate tragic writer. I have known, among amateur authors, some of the gayest persons, whose compositions were all of a melancholy turn; and for myself, some of my nearest approaches to comic have been written under a deep depression of spirits. This is strange, but so is all that appertains to our strange natures; and the more we analyze the anomalies in ourselves or others, the more incomprehensible they appear. I believe (continued Byron) the less we reflect on them the better; at least I am sure those that reflect the least are the happiest.

"I once heard a clever medical man say, that if a person were to occupy himself a certain time in counting the pulsations of his heart, it would

have the effect of accelerating its movements, and, if continued, would produce disease. So it is with the mind and nature of man; our examinations and reflections lead to no definitive conclusions, and often engender a morbid state of feeling, that increases the anomalies for which we sought to account. We know that we live (continued Byron), and to live and to suffer are, in my opinion, synonymous. We know also that we shall die, though the how, the when, and the where, we are ignorant of; the whole knowledge of man can pierce no farther, and centuries revolving on centuries have made us no wiser. I think it was Luther who said that the human mind was like a drunken man on horseback—prop it on one side, and it falls on the other: who that has entered into the recesses of his own mind, or examined all that is exposed in the minds of others, but must have discovered this tendency to weakness, which is generally in proportion to the strength in some other faculty?

"Great imagination is seldom accompanied by equal powers of reason, and *vice versâ*, so that we rarely possess superiority in any one point, except at the expense of another. It is surely then unjust (continued Byron, laughing,) to render poets responsible for their want of common sense, since it is only by the excess of imagination

they can arrive at being poets, and this excess debars reason; indeed, the very circumstance of a man's yielding to the vocation of a poet ought to serve as a voucher that he is no longer of sound mind."

Byron always became gay when any subject afforded him an opportunity of ridiculing poets; he entered into it *con amore*, and generally ended by some sarcasm on the profession, or on himself. He has often said, "We of the craft are all crazy, but *I* more than the rest; some are affected by gaiety, others by melancholy, but all are more or less touched, though few except myself have the candour to avow it, which I do to spare my friends the pain of sending it forth to the world. This very candour is another proof that I am not of sound mind (continued he), for people will be sure to say how far gone he must be, when he admits it; on the principle that when a belle or beau owns to thirty-five, the world gives them credit for at least seven years more, from the belief that if we seldom speak the truth of others, we never do of ourselves, at least on subjects of personal interest or vanity."

Talking of an acquaintance, Byron said: "Look at ——, and see how he gets on in the world—he is as unwilling to do a bad action as he is incapable of doing a good: fear prevents the first, and *méchanceté* the second. The differ-

ence between —— and me is, that I abuse many, and really, with one or two exceptions, (and, mind you, *they are males*,) hate none; and he abuses none and hates many, if not all. Fancy—in the Palace of Truth, what good fun it would be, to hear him, while he believed himself uttering the most honeyed compliments, giving vent to all the spite and rancour that has been pent up in his mind for years, and then to see the person he has been so long flattering hearing his real sentiments for the first time: this would be rare fun! Now, I would appear to great advantage in the Palace of Truth," continued Byron, "though you look ill-naturedly incredulous; for while I thought I was vexing friends and foes with spiteful speeches, I should be saying good-natured things, for, *au fond*, I have no malice, at least none that lasts beyond the moment."

Never was there a more true observation: Byron's is a fine nature, spite of all the weeds that may have sprung up in it; and I am convinced that it is the excellence of the poet, or rather let me say, the effect of that excellence, that has produced the defects of the man. In proportion to the admiration *one* has excited, has been the severity of the censure bestowed on the other, and often most unjustly. The world has burnt incense before the poet, and

heaped ashes on the head of the man. This has revolted and driven him out of the pale of social life: his wounded pride has avenged itself, by painting his own portrait in the most sombre colours, as if to give a still darker picture than has yet been drawn by his foes, while glorying in forcing even from his foes an admiration as unbounded for his genius as has been their disapprobation for his character. Had his errors met with more mercy, he might have been a less grand poet, but he would have been a more estimable man; the good that is now dormant in his nature would have been called forth, and the evil would not have been excited. The blast that withers the rose destroys not its thorns, which often remain, the sole remembrancer of the flower they grow near; and so it is with some of our finest qualities,—blighted by unkindness, we can only trace them by the faults their destruction has made visible.

Lord Byron, in talking of his friend, Count Pietro Gamba, (the brother of the Countess Guiccioli,) whom he had presented to us soon after our arrival at Genoa, remarked that he was one of the most amiable, brave, and excellent young men he had ever encountered, with a thirst for knowledge and a disinterestedness rarely to be met with. "He is my grand *point d'appui* for Greece," said he, "as I know he will

neither deceive nor flatter me." We have found Count Pietro Gamba exactly what Lord Byron had described him ; sensible, mild, and amiable, devotedly attached to Lord B., and dreaming of glory and Greece. He is extremely good-looking, and Lord Byron told us he resembled his sister very much, which I dare say increased his partiality for him not a little.

Habit has a strong influence over Byron: he likes routine, and detests what he calls being put out of his way. He told me that any infringement on his habitual way of living, or passing his time, annoyed him. Talking of thin women, he said, that if they were young and pretty, they reminded him of dried butterflies ; but if neither, of spiders, whose nets would never catch him were he a fly, as they had nothing tempting. A new book is a treasure to him, provided it is really new ; for having read more than perhaps any man of his age, he can immediately discover a want of originality, and throws by the book in disgust at the first wilful plagiary he detects.

Talking of Mr. Ward,* Lord Byron said—

* The Hon. John William Ward, born August 9th, 1781, succeeded his father as Viscount Dudley and Ward on April 5th, 1823 ; he was created Viscount Ednam and Earl Dudley in 1827, and he died on March 6th, 1833. Byron heard him speak in the House of Commons in 1813, and remarked, "I like Ward—studied but keen, and sometimes eloquent." He was credited

"Ward is one of the best-informed men I know, and, in a *tête-à-tête*, is one of the most agreeable companions. He has great originality, and, being *très distrait*, it adds to the piquancy of his observations, which are sometimes somewhat *trop naïve*, though always amusing. This *naïveté* of his is the more piquant from his being really a good-natured man, who unconsciously thinks aloud. Interest Ward on a subject, and I know no one who can talk better. His expressions are concise without being poor, and terse and epigrammatic without being affected. He can compress (continued Byron) as much into a few words as anyone I know; and if he gave *more* of his attention to his associates, and *less* to himself, he would be one of the few whom one could praise, without being compelled to use the conjunction *but*. Ward has bad health, and unfortunately, like all valetudinarians, it occupies his attention too much, which will probably bring on a worse state," continued Byron, "that of

with learning his speeches by heart; hence the epigram by Rogers:

"Ward has no heart they say, but I deny it;
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it."

Luttrell wrote on the same subject after Ward became Lord Dudley:

"In vain my affections the ladies are seeking:
If I give up my heart, there's an end of my speaking."

confirmed egoism,—a malady that, though not to be found in the catalogue of ailments to which man is subject, yet perhaps is more to be dreaded than all that are."

I observed that egoism is in general the malady of the aged; and that, it appears, we become occupied with our own existence in proportion as it ceases to be interesting to others. "Yes," said Byron, "on the same principle as we see the plainest people the vainest,—nature giving them vanity and self-love to supply the want of that admiration they never can find in others. I can therefore pity and forgive the vanity of the ugly and deformed, whose sole consolation it is; but the handsome, whose good looks are mirrored in the eyes of all around them, should be content with that, and not indulge in such egregious vanity as they give way to in general. But to return to Ward," said Byron, "and this is not *apropos* to vanity, for I never saw anyone who has less. He is not properly appreciated in England. The English can better understand and enjoy the *bons mots* of a *bon vivant*, who can at all times set the table in a roar, than the neat *répliques* of Ward, which, exciting reflection, are more likely to silence the rabble-riot of intemperance. They like better the person who makes them laugh, though often at their own expense, than he who forces them to think,—an

operation which the mental faculties of few of them are calculated to perform: so that poor Ward, finding himself undervalued, sinks into self, and this, at the long run, is dangerous:—

> "'For well we know, the mind, too finely wrought,
> Preys on itself, and is o'erpowered by thought.'

"There are many men in England of superior abilities, (continued Byron,) who are lost from the habits and inferiority of their associates. Such men, finding that they cannot raise their companions to their level, are but too apt to let themselves down to that of the persons they live with; and hence many a man condescends to be merely a wit, and man of pleasure, who was born for better things. Poor Sheridan often played this character in society; but he maintained his superiority over the herd, by having established a literary and political reputation; and as I have heard him more than once say, when his jokes have drawn down plaudits from companions, to whom, of an evening at least, sobriety and sadness were alike unknown,—'It is some consolation, that if I set the table in a roar, I can at pleasure set the senate in a roar;' and this was muttered while under the influence of wine, and as if apologizing to his own mind for the profanation it was evident he felt he had offered to it at the moment.

"Lord Alvanley* is a delightful companion, (said Byron,) brilliant, witty, and playful; he can be irresistibly comic when he pleases, but what could he not be if he pleased, for he has talents to be anything? I lose patience when I see such a man throw himself away; for there are plenty of men, who could be witty, brilliant, and comic, but who could be nothing else, while he is all these, but could be much more. How many men have made a figure in public life, without half his abilities! But indolence and the love of pleasure will be the bane of Alvanley, as it has been of many a man of talent before."

* William Arden, second Lord Alvanley, born September 20th, 1789, died November 16th, 1849, succeeded Beau Brummel as a fashionable wit and a spendthrift. Captain Gronow writes of him as follows: "Apart from his extravagance, Alvanley, the magnificent, the witty, the famous, and chivalrous, was the idol of the clubs and of society, from the King to the ensign of the Guards. . . . When he succeeded to his father's fortune, he inherited an income of £8,000 a year; when he died, he did not leave to his brother, who succeeded to the title, above £2,000." Again: "To Lord Alvanley was awarded the reputation, good or bad, of all the witticisms in the clubs after the abdication of the throne of Dandyism by Brummel, who, before that time, was always quoted as the sayer of good things, as Sheridan had been some time before. Lord Alvanley had the talk of the day completely under his control, and was the arbiter of the school for scandal in St. James's."

CHAPTER VIII.

Byron's habit of ridicule—His admiration of Napoleon—Metternich on Napoleon—Why the Viennese speak better French than do the English—A very good reason—Why Don Juan turned Methodist—What the world says—A week at Lady Jersey's—Lord John Russell's essays on London society—Hallam's "Middle Ages"—The golden rule—Douglas Kinnaird—Cremation *versus* burial—Hypochondriasm, bodily and mental—Sydney Smith on Mackintosh—Lord Erskine—The "Anti-Jacobin"—The best cosmetic—William Spencer, the "Poet of Society"—No parody—A galaxy of "stars"—Decent mediocrity—Canning—The weight of riches—An honest poor man.

THE more I see of Byron, the more am I convinced that all he says and does should be judged more leniently than the sayings and doings of others—as his proceed from the impulse of the moment, and never from premeditated malice. He cannot resist expressing whatever comes into his mind; and the least shade of the ridiculous is seized by him at a glance, and portrayed with a facility and felicity that must encourage the propensity to ridicule, which is inherent in him. All the malice of his nature has lodged itself on

his lips and the fingers of his right hand—for there is none, I am persuaded, to be found in his heart, which has more of good than most people give him credit for, except those who have lived with him in habits of intimacy.

He enters into society as children enter their play-ground, for relaxation and amusement, when his mind has been strained to the utmost, and he feels the necessity of unbending it. Ridicule is his play; it amuses him perhaps the more that he sees it amuses others, and much of its severity is mitigated by the boyish glee, and laughing sportiveness, with which his sallies are uttered. All this is felt when he is conversing, but unfortunately it cannot be conveyed to the reader: the narrator would therefore deprecate the censure his sarcasms may excite, in memory of the smiles and gaiety that palliated them when spoken.

Byron is fond of talking of Napoleon; and told me that his admiration of him had much increased since he had been in Italy, and witnessed the stupendous works he had planned and executed. "To pass through Italy without thinking of Napoleon, (said he,) is like visiting Naples without looking at Vesuvius." Seeing me smile at the comparison, he added—"Though the works of one are indestructible, and the other destructive, still one is continually reminded of the power of both." "And yet (said I) there

are days, when, like all your other favourites, Napoleon does not escape censure." "That may be, (said Byron,) but I find fault and quarrel with Napoleon, as a lover does with the trifling faults of his mistress, from excessive liking, which tempts me to desire that he had been all faultless; and, like the lover, I return with renewed fondness after each quarrel. Napoleon (continued Byron) was a grand creature, and though he was hurled from his pedestal, after having made thrones his footstool, his memory still remains, like the colossal statue of the Memnon, though cast down from its seat of honour, still bearing the ineffaceable traces of grandeur and sublimity, to astonish future ages. When Metternich (continued Byron) was depreciating the genius of Napoleon, in a circle at Vienna where his word was a law and his nod a decree, he appealed to John William Ward,* if Bonaparte had not been greatly overrated. Ward's answer was as courageous as admirable. He replied, that 'Napoleon had rendered past glory doubtful, and future fame impossible.' This was expressed in French, and such pure French, that all present were struck with admiration, no less with the thought than with the mode of expressing it." I told Byron that this reminded me of a reply made by Mr. Ward to a lady at Vienna, who somewhat rudely

* Lord Dudley, see p. 173.

remarked to him, that it was strange that all the best society at Vienna spoke French as well as German, while the English scarcely spoke French at all, or spoke it ill. Ward answered, that the English must be excused for their want of practice, as the French army had not been twice to London to teach them, as they had been at Vienna. "The coolness of Ward's manner (said Byron) must have lent force to such a reply: I have heard him say many things worth remembering, and the neatness of their expression was as remarkable as the justness of the thought. It is a pity (continued Byron) that Ward has not written anything: his style, judging by letters of his that I have seen, is admirable, and reminded me of Sallust."

Having, one day, taken the liberty of (what he termed) scolding Lord Byron, and finding him take it with his usual good-nature, I observed that I was agreeably surprised by the patience with which he listened to my lectures; he smiled, and replied, "No man dislikes being lectured by a woman, provided she be not his mother, sister, wife, or mistress: first, it implies that she takes an interest in him, and, secondly, that she does not think him irreclaimable: then, there is not that air of superiority in women when they give advice, that men, particularly one's contemporaries, affect; and even if there

were, men think their own superiority so acknowledged, that they listen without humiliation to the *gentler*, I don't say weaker, sex. There is one exception, however, for I confess I could not stand being lectured by Lady ——; but then she is neither of the weak nor gentle sex—she is a nondescript—having all the faults of both sexes, without the virtues of either. Two lines in the 'Henriade,' describing Catherine de Medicis, seem made for Lady —— (continued Byron)—

> "'Possédant et un mot, pour n'en pas dire plus,
> Les défauts de son sexe et peu de ses vertus.'"

I remember only one instance of Byron's being displeased with my frankness. We were returning on horseback from Nervi, and in defending a friend of mine, whom he assailed with all the slings and arrows of ridicule and sarcasm, I was obliged to be more severe than usual; and having at that moment arrived at the turn of the road that led to Albaro, he politely, but coldly, wished me good-bye, and galloped off. We had scarcely advanced a hundred yards, when he came galloping after us, and reaching out his hand, said to me, "Come, come, give me your hand; I cannot bear that we should part so formally: I am sure what you have said was right, and meant for my good; so God bless you, and to-morrow we shall ride again, and I promise to say nothing that can

produce a lesson." We all agreed that we had never seen Byron appear to so much advantage. He gives me the idea of being the man the most easily to be managed I ever saw: I wish Lady Byron had discovered the means, and both might now be happier.

Lord Byron told me that the Countess Guiccioli had repeatedly asked him to discontinue "Don Juan," as its immorality shocked her, and that she could not bear that anything of the kind should be written under the same roof with her. "To please her (said Byron) I gave it up for some time, and have only got permission to continue it on condition of making my hero a more moral person. I shall end by making him turn Methodist; this will please the English, and be an *amende honorable* for his sins and mine.

"I once got an anonymous letter, written in a very beautiful female hand (said Byron), on the subject of 'Don Juan,' with a beautiful illustrative drawing, beneath which was written—'When Byron wrote the first canto of "Don Juan," Love, that had often guided his pen, resigned it to Sensuality—and Modesty, covering her face with her veil, to hide her blushes and dry her tears, fled from him for ever.' The drawing (continued Byron) represented Love and Modesty turning their backs on wicked Me—and Sen-

suality, a fat, flushed, wingless Cupid, presenting me with a pen. Was not this a pretty conceit? at all events, it is some consolation to occupy the attention of women so much, though it is but by my faults; and I confess it gratifies me.

"Apropos to Cupid—it is strange (said Byron) that the ancients, in their mythology, should represent Wisdom by a woman, and Love by a boy! how do you account for this? I confess I have little faith in Minerva, and think that Wisdom is, perhaps, the last attribute I should be inclined to give woman; but then I do allow, that Love would be more suitably represented by a female than a male; for men or boys feel not the passion with the delicacy and purity that women do; and this is my real opinion, which must be my peace-offering for doubting the wisdom of your sex."

Byron is infirm of purpose—decides without reflection—and gives up his plans if they are opposed for any length of time; but, as far as I can judge of him, though he yields, he does it not with a good grace: he is a man likely to show that such a sacrifice of self-will was offered up more through indolence than affection, so that his yielding can seldom be quite satisfactory, at least to a delicate mind. He says that all women are *exigeante*, and apt to be dissatisfied: he is, as I

have told him, too selfish and indolent not to have given those who had more than a common interest in him cause to be so.

It is such men as Byron who complain of women; they touch not the chords that give sweet music in woman's breast, but strike—with a bold and careless hand—those that jar and send forth discord. Byron has a false notion on the subject of women; he fancies that they are all disposed to be tyrants, and that the moment they know their power they abuse it. We have had many arguments on this point—I maintaining that the more disposed men were to yield to the empire of woman, the less were they inclined to exact, as submission disarmed, and attention and affection enslaved them.

Men are capable of making great sacrifices, who are not willing to make the lesser ones, on which so much of the happiness of life depends. The great sacrifices are seldom called for, but the minor ones are in daily requisition; and the making them with cheerfulness and grace enhances their value, and banishes from the domestic circle the various misunderstandings, discussions, and coldnesses, that arise to embitter existence, where a little self-denial might have kept them off. Woman is a creature of feeling,—easily wounded, but susceptible of all the soft and kind emotions: destroy this sensitiveness, and you rob

her of her greatest attraction; study her happiness, and you insure your own.

"One of the things that most please me in the Italian character (said Byron) is the total absence of that belief which exists so generally in England in the mind of each individual, that the circle in which he lives, and which he dignifies by calling *The World*, is occupied with him and his actions—an idea founded on the extreme vanity that characterizes the English, and that precludes the possibility of living for one's self or those immediately around one. How many of my *soi-disant* friends in England are dupes to this vanity (continued Byron)—keeping up expensive establishments which they can ill afford—living in crowds, and with people who do not suit them—feeling *ennuyés* day after day, and yet submitting to all this tiresome routine of vapid reunions,—living, during the fashionable season, if living it can be called, in a state of intermittent fever, for the sake of being considered to belong to a certain set.

"During the time I passed in London, I always remarked that I never met a person who did not tell me how bored he or she had been the day or night before at Lady This or Lady That's; and when I've asked, 'Why do you go if it bores you?' the invariable answer has been—'One can't help going; it would be so

odd not to go.' Old and young, ugly and handsome, all have the rage in England of losing their identity in crowds; and prefer conjugating the verb *ennuyer, en masse,* in heated rooms, to conning it over in privacy in a purer atmosphere. The constancy and perseverance with which our compatriots support fashionable life have always been to me a subject of wonder, if not of admiration, and prove what they might be capable of in a good cause. I am curious to know (continued Byron) if the rising generation will fall into the same inane routine; though it is to be hoped the march of intellect will have some influence in establishing something like society, which has hitherto been only to be found in country-houses.

"I spent a week at Lady Jersey's once, and very agreeably it passed; the guests were well chosen—the host and hostess on 'hospitable thoughts intent'—the establishment combining all the luxury of a *maison montée en prince* with the ease and comfort of a well-ordered home. How different do the same people appear in London and in the country!—they are hardly to be recognised. In the latter they are as natural and unaffected as they are insipid or over-excited in the former. A certain place (continued Byron) not to be named to 'ears polite,' is said to be paved with good intentions, and London (viewing

the effect it produces on its fashionable inhabitants) may really be supposed to be paved by evil passions, as few can touch its *pavé* without contamination. I have been reading Lord John Russell's Essays on London Society,* and find them clever and amusing (said Byron), but too microscopic for my taste: he has, however, treated the subject with a lightness and playfulness best suited to it, and his reflections show an accuracy of observation that proves he is capable of better things. He who would take a just view of the world must neither examine it through a microscope nor a magnifying-glass. Lord John is a sensible and amiable man, and bids fair to distinguish himself.

"Do you know Hallam? (said Byron). Of course I need not ask you if you have read his 'Middle Ages:' it is an admirable work, full of research, and does Hallam honour.† I know no one capable of having written it except him; for, admitting that a writer could be found who could bring to the task his knowledge and talents, it

* The title of this book, which was published in 1820, is "Essays and Sketches of Life and Character by a Gentleman who has left his Lodgings." The author's name does not appear on the title-page and that of Joseph Skillett is at the end of the preface. It is characteristic of the writer that the longest essay is on "The State of the English Constitution."

† Hallam's most notable work, "The Constitutional History of England," did not appear till three years after Byron's death.

would be difficult to find one who united to these his research, patience, and perspicuity of style. The reflections of Hallam are at once just and profound—his language well chosen and impressive. I remember (continued Byron) being struck by a passage, where, touching on the Venetians, he writes—'Too blind to avert danger, too cowardly to withstand it, the most ancient government of Europe made not an instant's resistance: the peasants of Underwald died upon their mountains—the nobles of Venice clung only to their lives.' This is the style in which history ought to be written, if it is wished to impress it on the memory; and I found myself, on my first perusal of the 'Middle Ages,' repeating aloud many such passages as the one I have cited, they struck my fancy so much. Robertson's State of Europe, in his 'Charles the Fifth,' is another of my great favourites (continued Byron); it contains an epitome of information. Such works do more towards the extension of knowledge than half the ponderous tomes that lumber up our libraries: they are the railroads to learning; while the others are the neglected old roads that deter us from attempting the journey.

"It is strange (said Byron) that we are in general much more influenced by the opinions of those whose sentiments ought to be a matter of indifference to us, than by that of near or dear

friends ; nay, we often do things totally opposed to the opinions of the latter (on whom much, if not all, our comfort depends), to cultivate that of the former, who are or can be nothing in the scale of our happiness. It is in this opposition between our conduct and our affections that much of our troubles originates ; it loosens the bonds of affection between us and those we ought to please, and fails to excite any good-will in those whom our vanity leads us to wish to propitiate, because they are regardless of us and of our actions.

"With all our selfishness, this is a great mistake (continued Byron); for, as I take it for granted we have all some feelings of natural affection for our kindred or friends, and consequently wish to retain theirs; we never wound or offend them without its re-acting on ourselves, by alienating them from us: hence *selfishness* ought to make us study the wishes of those to whom we look for happiness; and the principle of doing as you would be done by, a principle which, if acted upon, could not fail to add to the stock of general good, was founded in wisdom and knowledge of the selfishness of human nature."

Talking of Mr. D. Kinnaird, Byron said, "My friend Dug is a proof that a good heart cannot compensate for an irritable temper : whenever he

is named, people dwell on the last and pass over the first; and yet he really has an excellent heart, and a sound head, of which I, in common with many others of his friends, have had various proofs. He is clever too, and well informed, and I do think would have made a figure in the world, were it not for his temper, which gives a dictatorial tone to his manner, that is offensive to the *amour-propre* of those with whom he mixes; and when you alarm that (said Byron), there is an end of your influence. By tacitly admitting the claims of vanity of others, you make at least acquiescent beholders of your own, and this is something gained; for, depend on it, disguise it how we will, vanity is the prime mover in most, if not all, of us, and some of the actions and works that have the most excited our admiration have been inspired by this passion, that *none* will own to, yet that influences *all*.

"The great difference between the happy and unhappy (said Byron) is, that the former are afraid to contemplate death, and the latter look forward to it as a release from suffering. Now as death is inevitable, and life brief and uncertain, unhappiness, viewed in this point, is rather desirable than otherwise; but few, I fear, derive consolation from the reflection. I think of death often (continued Byron), as I believe do most people who are not happy, and view it as a refuge

'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' There is something calm and soothing to me in the thought of death; and the only time that I feel repugnance to it is on a fine day, in solitude, in a beautiful country, when all nature seems rejoicing in light and life. The contrast then between the beautiful and animated world around me, and the dark narrow grave, gives a chill to the feelings; for, with all the boasted philosophy of man, his physical *being* influences his notions of that state where they can be felt no more. The nailed down coffin, and the dark gloomy vault, or grave, always mingle with our thoughts of death; then the decomposition of our mortal frames, the being preyed on by reptiles, add to the disgusting horror of the picture, and one has need of all the hopes of immortality to enable one to pass over this bridge between the life we know and the life we hope to find.*

"Do you know (said Byron) that when I have looked on some face that I love, imagination has often figured the changes that death must one day produce on it—the worm rioting on lips now smiling, the features and hues of health changed

* Since the introduction of cremation, less horrible thoughts prevail in the minds of those who favour that method of treating human remains; for, as Sir Thomas Browne wrote, "tragical abominations are escaped in burning burials."

to the livid and ghastly tints of putrefaction; and the image conjured up by my fancy, but which is as true as it is a fearful anticipation of what *must* arrive, has left an impression for hours that the actual presence of the object, in all the bloom of health, has not been able to banish: this is one of *my* pleasures of imagination."

Talking of hypochondriasm, Byron said, that the world had little compassion for two of the most serious ills that human nature is subject to —mental or bodily hypochondriasm: "Real ailments may be cured (said he), but imaginary ones, either moral or physical, admit of no remedy. People analyze the supposed causes of maladies of the mind; and if the sufferer be rich, well born, well looking, and clever in any way, they conclude he, or she, can have no cause for unhappiness; nay, assign the cleverness, which is often the source of unhappiness, as among the adventitious gifts that increase, or ought to increase, felicity, and pity not the unhappiness they cannot understand. They take the same view of imaginary physical ailments, never reflecting that 'happiness (or health) is often but in opinion;' and that he who believes himself wretched or ill suffers perhaps more than he who has real cause for wretchedness, or who is labouring under disease with less acute sensibility to feel his troubles, and nerves subdued by ill-health,

which prevents his suffering from bodily ills as severely as does the hypochondriac from imaginary ones. The irritability of genius (continued Byron) is nothing more or less than a delicacy of organization, which gives a susceptibility to impressions to which coarser minds are never subject, and cultivation and refinement but increase it, until the unhappy victim becomes a prey to mental hypochondriasm."

Byron furnished a melancholy illustration of the fate of genius; and while he dwelt on the diseases to which it is subject, I looked at his fine features, already marked by premature age, and his face "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and stamped with decay, until I felt that *his* was no hypothetical statement. Alas!—

> "Noblest minds
> Sink soonest into ruins, like a tree
> That, with the weight of its own golden fruitage,
> Is bent down to the dust."

"Do you know Mackintosh? (asked Lord Byron)—his is a mind of powerful calibre. Madame de Staël used to extol him to the skies, and was perfectly sincere in her admiration of him, which was not the case with all whom she praised. Mackintosh also praised her: but his is a mind that, as Moore writes, 'rather loves to praise than blame,' for with a

judgment so comprehensive, a knowledge so general, and a critical acumen rarely to be met with, his sentences are never severe.* He is a powerful writer and speaker; there is an earnestness and vigour in his style, and a force and purity in his language, equally free from inflation and loquacity. Lord Erskine is, I know, a friend of yours (continued Byron), and a most gifted person he is. The Scotch are certainly very superior people; with intellects naturally more acute than the English, they are better educated and make better men of business. Erskine is full of imagination, and in this he resembles your countrymen, the Irish, more than the Scotch. The Irish would make better poets, and the Scotch philosophers; but this excess of imagination gives a redundancy to the writings and speeches of the Irish that I object to: they come down on one with similes, tropes, and metaphors, a superabundance of riches that makes one long for a little plain matter of fact.

* Sydney Smith, who admired Mackintosh, said that "his chief foible was indiscriminate praise." He wrote a speech caricaturing this failing, of which the last two sentences will serve as a specimen: "I cannot conclude, sir, without thanking you for the very clear and distinct manner in which you have announced the proposition on which we are to vote. It is but common justice to add, that public assemblies rarely witness articulation so perfect, language so select, and a manner so eminently remarkable for everything that is kind, impartial, and just."—"Memoir of Sydney Smith," vol. i., p. 441.

"An Irishman, of course I mean a clever one (continued Byron), educated in Scotland, would be perfection, for the Scots professors would prune down the over-luxuriant shoots of his imagination, and strengthen his reasoning powers. I hope you are not very much offended with me for this critique on your countrymen (continued Byron); but, *en revanche*, I give you *carte blanche* to attack mine, as much as you please, and will join in your strictures to the utmost extent to which you wish to go.

"Lord Erskine is, or was, (said Byron,)—for I suppose age has not improved him more than it generally does people,—the most brilliant person imaginable;—quick, vivacious, and sparkling, he spoke so well that I never felt tired of listening to him, even when he abandoned himself to that subject of which all his other friends and acquaintances expressed themselves so fatigued—*self*. His egoism was remarkable, but there was a *bonhomie* in it that showed he had a better opinion of mankind than they deserved; for it implied a belief that his listeners could be interested in what concerned him, whom they professed to like.*

* The caricature in the *Anti-Jacobin* of his manner is amusing, and it may convey a good idea of it: "Mr. Erskine now rose, in consequence of some allusions which had been made to the trial by jury. He professed himself to be highly flattered by the encomiums which had been lavished upon him; but at the same

"He was deceived in this (continued Byron), as are all who have a favourable opinion of their fellow-men: in society all and each are occupied with self, and can rarely pardon any one who presumes to draw their attention to other subjects for any length of time. Erskine had been a great man, and he knew it; and in talking so continually of self, imagined that he was but the echo of fame. All his talents, wit, and brilliancy were insufficient to excuse this weakness in the opinion of his friends; and I have seen bores, acknowledged bores, turn from this clever man, with every symptom of *ennui*, when he has been reciting an interesting anecdote, merely because he was the principal actor in it.

"This fastidiousness of the English," continued Byron, "the habit of pronouncing people bores, often imposes on strangers and stupid people, who conceive that it arises from delicacy of taste and

time he was conscious that he could not, without some degree of reason, consent to arrogate to himself those qualities which the partiality of his friends had attributed to him. He had, on former occasions, declared himself to be clothed with the infirmities of man's nature; and he now begged leave, in all humility, to reiterate that confession: he should never cease to consider himself as a feeble, and with respect to the extent of his faculties, in many respects a finite, being. He had ever borne in mind, and he hoped he should ever continue to bear in mind, those words of the inspired Penman, 'Thou hast made him less than the angels to crown him with glory and honour.'"—*The Anti-Jacobin*, vol. i., pp. 126, 127.

superior abilities. I never was taken in by it, for I have generally found that those who were the most ready to pronounce others bores, had the most indisputable claims to that title in their own persons. The truth is," continued Byron, "the English are very envious, they are *au fond* conscious that they are dreadfully dull—being loquacious without liveliness, proud without dignity, and *brusque* without sincerity; they never forgive those who show that they have made the same discovery, or who occupy public attention, of which they are jealous.

"An Englishman rarely condescends to take the trouble of conciliating admiration (though he is jealous of esteem), and he as rarely pardons those who have succeeded in attaining it. They are jealous," continued Byron, "of popularity of every sort, and not only depreciate the talents that obtain it, whatever they may be, but the person who possesses them. I have seen in London, in one of the circles the most *recherché*, a literary man *à la mode* universally attacked by the *élite* of the party, who were damning his merits with faint praise, and drawing his defects into notice, until some other candidate for approbation as a conversationist, a singer, or even a dancer, was named, when all fell upon him—proving that a superiority of tongue, voice, or heel was as little to be pardoned as genius or talent.

"I have known people," continued Byron, "talk of the highest efforts of genius as if they had been within the reach of each of the commonplace individuals of the circle; and comment on the acute reasonings of some logician as if they could have made the same deductions from the same premises, though ignorant of the most simple syllogism. Their very ignorance of the subjects on which they pronounce is perhaps the cause of the fearless decisions they give, for, knowing nought, they think everything easy: but this impertinence," continued Byron, "is difficult to be borne by those who know 'how painful 'tis to climb,' and who having, by labour, gained some one of the eminences in literature—which, alas! as we all know, are but as mole-hills compared to the acclivity they aim at ascending—are the more deeply impressed with the difficulties that they have yet to surmount. I have never yet been satisfied with any one of my own productions; I cannot read them over without detecting a thousand faults; but when I read critiques upon them by those who could *not* have written them, I lose my patience.

"There is an old and stupid song," said Byron, "that says—'Friendship with woman is sister to love.' There is some truth in this; for let a man form a friendship with a woman, even though she be no longer young or handsome,

there is a softness and tenderness attached to it that no male friendship can know. A proof of this is, that Lady M——, who might have been my mother, excited an interest in my feelings that few young women have been able to awaken. She was a charming person—a sort of modern Aspasia, uniting the energy of a man's mind with the delicacy and tenderness of a woman's. She wrote and spoke admirably, because she felt admirably. Envy, malice, hatred, or uncharitableness, found no place in her feelings. She had all of philosophy, save its moroseness, and all of nature, save its defects and general *faiblesse;* or if some portion of *faiblesse* attached to her, it only served to render her more forbearing to the errors of others. I have often thought, that, with a little more youth, Lady M—— might have turned my head, at all events she often turned my heart, by bringing me back to mild feelings, when the demon passion was strong within me. Her mind and heart were as fresh as if only sixteen summers had flown over her, instead of four times that number: and the mind and heart always leave external marks of their state of health. Goodness is the best cosmetic that has yet been discovered, for I am of opinion that, not according to our friend Moore—

> "'As the shining casket's worn,
> The gem within will tarnish, too,'

but, *au contraire*, the decay of the gem will tarnish the casket—the sword will wear away the scabbard. Then how rare is it to see age give its experience without its hardness of heart! and this was Lady M——'s case. She was a captivating creature, *malgré* her eleven or twelve lustres, and I shall always love her.

"Did you know William Spencer, the Poet of Society, as they used to call him?"* said Byron. "His was really what your countrymen call an elegant mind, polished, graceful, and sentimental, with just enough gaiety to prevent his being lachrymose, and enough sentiment to prevent his being too anacreontic. There was a great deal of genuine fun in Spencer's conversation, as well as a great deal of refined sentiment in his verses. I liked both, for both were perfectly aristocratic in their way; neither one nor the other was calculated to please the *canaille*, which made me like them all the better.

"England was, after all I may say against it, very delightful in my day; that is to say, there were some six or seven very delightful people

* The Honourable William Robert Spencer, born 1769, died October 23rd, 1834, composed verses which had so much vogue that the authors of "The Rejected Addresses" parodied them in one styled "The Beautiful Incendiary," of which Jeffrey wrote in the *Edinburgh Review*: "The flashy, fashionable, artificial style of this writer, with his confident and extravagant compliments, can scarcely be said to be parodied in such lines."

among the hundred commonplace that one saw every day—seven stars, the pleiades, visible when all others had hid their diminished heads; and look where we may, where can we find so many stars united elsewhere? Moore, Campbell, Rogers, Spencer, as poets; and how many conversationists to be added to the galaxy of stars—one set irradiating our libraries of a morning, and the other illuminating our dining-rooms of an evening! All this was, and would be, very delightful, could you have confined the stars within their own planets; but, alas! they were given to wander into other spheres, and often set in the arctic circles, the frozen zones of nobility.

"I often thought at that time," continued Byron, "that England had reached the pinnacle—that point where, as no advance can be made, a nation must retrograde—and I don't think I was wrong. Our army had arrived at a state of perfection before unknown; Wellington's star was in the ascendant, and all others paled before its influence. We had Grey, Grenville, Wellesley, and Holland in the House of Peers, and Sheridan, Canning, Burdett, and Tierney in the Commons. In society we were rich in poets, then in their zenith, now, alas! fallen into the sear and yellow leaf; and in wits of whom one did not speak in the past tense. Of these, those whom the de-

stroyer Time has not cut off he has mutilated; the wine of their lives has turned sour—and lost its body, and who is there to supply their places? The march of intellect has been preceded by pioneers, who have levelled all the eminences of distinction, and reduced all to the level of decent mediocrity.

"It is said that as people grow old they magnify the superiority of past times, and detract from the advantages of the present: this is natural enough; for admitting that the advantages were equal, we view them through a different medium—the sight, like all the other senses, loses its fine perceptions, and nought looks as bright through the dim optics of age as through the bright ones of youth; but as I have only reached the respectable point of middle age," continued Byron, "I cannot attribute my opinion of the falling off of the present men to my senility; and I really see or hear of no young men, either in the literary or political fields of London, who promise to supply the places of the men of my time—no successional crop to replace the passing or the past."

I told Byron that the march of intellect had rendered the spread of knowledge so general, that young men abstained from writing, or at least from publishing, until they thought they had produced something likely to attract attention,

which was now much more difficult to be obtained than formerly, as people grew more fastidious every day. He would not agree to this, but maintained that mediocrity was the distinguishing feature of the present times, and that we should see no more men like those of his day. To hear Byron talk of himself, one would suppose that instead of thirty-six he was sixty years old: there is no affectation in this, as he says he feels all the languor and exhaustion of age.

Byron always talks in terms of high admiration of Mr. Canning; says he is a man of superior abilities, brilliant fancy, cultivated mind, and most effective eloquence; and adds, that Canning only wanted to be born to a good estate to have made a great statesman. "Fortune," continued Byron, "would have saved him from tergiversation, the bare suspicion of which is destructive to the confidence a statesman ought to inspire. As it is," said he, "Canning is brilliant but not great, with all the elements in him that constitute greatness."

Talking of Lord ——, Byron observed that his success in life was a proof of the weight that fortune gave a man, and his popularity a certain sign of his mediocrity: "the first," said Byron, "puts him out of the possibility of being suspected of mercenary motives; and the second

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precludes envy; yet you hear him praised at every side for his independence!—and a great merit it is truly," said he, "in a man who has high rank and large fortune—what can he want, and where could be the temptation to barter his principles, since he already has all that people seek in such a traffic? No, I see no merit in Lord ——'s independence; give me the man who is poor and untitled, with talents to excite temptation, and honesty to resist it, and I will give him credit for independence of principle, because he deserves it. People," continued Byron, "talk to you of Lord ——'s high character—in what does it consist? Why, in being, as I before said, put by fortune and rank beyond the power of temptation—having an even temper, thanks to a cool head and a colder heart!—and a mediocrity of talents that insures his being 'content to live in decencies for ever,' while it exempts him from exciting envy or jealousy, the followers of excellence."

CHAPTER IX.

Sir Walter Scott — His thrice-read novels — Byron's memory — Madame du Deffand — Richardson's novels — A letter to Voltaire — A lasting friendship — Extremes meet — Stoicism — Righteous indignation — Sir William Drummond — His "Academical questions" — An admirable preface — Robert Walpole — Francis Horner — Translations — Pope's "Homer" — George Colman the younger — Canning — Byron's monody on Sheridan, and Moore's lines — Byron on the Irish.

Byron continually reverts to Sir Walter Scott, and always in terms of admiration for his genius, and affection for his good qualities; he says that he never gets up from the perusal of one of his works, without finding himself in a better disposition; and that he generally reads his novels three times. "I find such a just mode of thinking," said Byron, "that I could fill volumes with detached thoughts from Scott, all, and each, full of truth and beauty. Then how good are his definitions! Do you remember, in 'Peveril of the Peak,' where he says, 'Presence of mind is courage. Real valour consists, not in being insensible to danger, but in being prompt to

confront and disarm it'? How true is this, and what an admirable distinction between moral and physical courage!"

I complimented him on his memory, and he added:—"My memory is very retentive, but the passage I repeated I read this morning for the third time. How applicable to Scott's works is the observation made by Madame du Deffand on Richardson's Novels, in one of her letters to Voltaire: 'La morale y est en action, et n'a jamais été traitée d'une manière plus intéressante. On meurt d'envie d'être parfait après cette lecture, et l'on croit que rien n'est si aisé.'* I think," continued Byron, after a pause, "that Scott is the only very successful genius that could be cited as being as generally beloved as a man, as he is admired as an author; and, I must add, he deserves it, for he is so thoroughly good-natured, sincere, and honest, that he disarms the envy and jealousy his extraordinary genius must excite. I hope to meet Scott once more before I die; for, worn out as are my affections, he still retains a strong hold on them."

* The passage referred to may be the following. After having said that English novels were too long, Madame du Deffand continues: "Mais je trouve que ce sont des traités de morale en actions, qui sont très—intéressante, et peuvent être fort utiles; c'est Paméla, Claire et Grandison, l'auteur est Richardson, il me parait avoir bien de l'esprit." —"Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand," vol. iv., p. 129.

There was something highly gratifying to the feelings in witnessing the warmth and cordiality that Byron's countenance and manner displayed when talking of Sir Walter; it proved how capable he was of entertaining friendship, — a sentiment of which he so frequently professed to doubt the existence: but in this, as on many other points, he never did himself justice; and the turn for ridicule and satire implanted in his nature led him to indulge in observations in which his real feelings had no share. Circumstances had rendered Byron suspicious; he was apt to attribute every mark of interest or good-will shown to him as emanating from vanity, that sought gratification by a contact with his poetical celebrity; this encouraged his predilection for hoaxing, ridiculing, and doubting friends and friendship. But as Scott's own well-earned celebrity put the possibility of such a motive out of the question, Byron yielded to the sentiment of friendship in all its force for him, and never named him but with praise and affection.

Byron's was a proud mind, that resisted correction, but that might easily be led by kindness; his errors had been so severely punished, that he became reckless and misanthropic, to avenge the injustice he had experienced; and, as misanthropy was foreign to his nature, its partial indulgence produced the painful state of being continually

at war with his better feelings, and of rendering him dissatisfied with himself and others.

Talking of the effects that ingratitude and disappointments produced on the character of the individual who experienced them, Byron said that "they invariably soured the nature of the person, who, when reduced to this state of acidity, was decried as a cynical, ill-natured brute. People wonder," continued he, "that a man is sour who has been feeding on acids all his life. The extremes of adversity and prosperity produce the same effects; they harden the heart, and enervate the mind; they render a person so selfish, that, occupied solely with his own pains or pleasures, he ceases to feel for others; hence, as sweets turn to acids as well as sours, excessive prosperity may produce the same consequences as adversity."

His was a nature to be bettered by prosperity, and to be rendered obstinate by adversity. He invoked Stoicism to resist injustice, but its shield repelled not a single blow aimed at his peace, while its appearance deprived him of the sympathy for which his heart yearned. Let those, who would judge with severity the errors of this wayward child of genius, look back at his days of infancy and youth, and ask themselves whether, under such unfavourable auspices, they could have escaped the defects that tarnish the lustre of his fame,—defects rendered more obvious by

the brightness they partially obscured, and which, without that brightness, had perhaps never been observed.

An eagle confined in a cage could not have been more misplaced than was Byron in the artificial and conventional society that disgusted him with the world; like that daring bird, he could fearlessly soar high, and contemplate the sun, but he was unfit for the busy haunts of men; and he, whose genius could people a desert, pined in the solitude of crowds. The people he saw resembled not the creatures his fancy had formed, and, with a heart yearning towards his fellow-men, pride and a false estimate of mankind repelled him from seeking their sympathy, though it deprived them not of his, as not all his assumed Stoicism could subdue the kind feelings that spontaneously showed themselves when the misfortunes of others were named. Byron warred only with the vices and follies of his species; and if he had a bitter jest and biting sarcasm for these, he had pity and forbearance for affliction, even though deserved, and forgot the cause in the effect. Misfortune was sacred in his eyes, and seemed to be the last link of the chain that connected him with his fellow-men.

I remember hearing a person in his presence revert to the unhappiness of an individual known to all the party present, and, having instanced some proofs of the unhappiness, observe, that the

person was not to be pitied, for he had brought it on himself by misconduct. I shall never forget the expression of Byron's face; it glowed with indignation, and, turning to the person who had excited it, he said, "If, as you say, this heavy misfortune has been caused by ——'s misconduct, then is he doubly to be pitied, for he has the reproaches of conscience to embitter his draught. Those who have lost what is considered the right to pity in losing reputation and self-respect, are the persons who stand most in need of commiseration; and yet the charitable feelings of the over-moral would deny them this boon; reserving it for those on whom undeserved misfortunes fall, and who, having that *within* which renders pity superfluous, have also respect to supply its place. Nothing so completely serves to demoralize a man as the certainty that he has lost the sympathy of his fellow-creatures; it breaks the last tie that binds him to humanity, and renders him reckless and irreclaimable. This," continued Byron, "is my moral; and this it is that makes me pity the guilty and respect the unfortunate."

While he spoke, the earnestness of his manner, and the increased colour and animation of his countenance, bore evident marks of the sincerity of the sentiments he uttered: it was at such moments that his native goodness burst forth, and pages of misanthropic sarcasms could not

efface the impression they left behind, though he often endeavoured to destroy such impressions by pleasantries against himself.

"When you go to Naples you must make acquaintance with Sir William Drummond,"* said Byron, "for he is certainly one of the most erudite men and admirable philosophers now living. He has all the wit of Voltaire, with a profundity that seldom appertains to wit, and writes so forcibly, and with such elegance and purity of

* Sir William Drummond, born about 1770, died 1828, was between 1801 and 1809 in the Diplomatic Service, having been employed as Ambassador to the Ottoman Porte, and Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Naples. He wrote "A Review of the Governments of Athens and Sparta," which was published in 1795; "Philosophical Sketches on the Principles of Society and Government," which appeared two years before, had no name on the title-page, and did not attract the public. His other writings, with the dates of publication, were a translation of "The Satires of Persius" (1798); "Academical Questions" (1805); "Herculanasia," in concert with Robert Walpole (1810); "Essay on a Punic Inscription found in the Island of Malta" (1810); a blank verse poem on "Odin" (1817): "Origenes" (1824 to 1829); "Œdipus Judiacus," printed for private circulation only (1811). The copy of "Academical Questions" in the library of the Reform Club contains copies of two manuscript letters from Sir William Drummond to Francis Horner, in which he writes: "It would not have been safe to have written upon such subjects as I have treated of, with that distinctness with which I can speak to a friend;" and, "I have made some unavailing exceptions against my own rule in the third chapter, in favour of the existence of a God as proved from the doctrine of causes and effects; but an attentive perusal of my work will show you that these were suggested by the personal fears of the author, and not by the independent reflexions of the philosopher.'

style, that his works possess a peculiar charm. Have you read his 'Academical Questions?' if not, get them directly, and I think you will agree with me, that the preface to that work alone would prove Sir William Drummond an admirable writer. He concludes it by the following sentence, which I think one of the best in our language:—'Prejudice may be trusted to guard the outworks for a short space of time, while Reason slumbers in the citadel; but if the latter sink into a lethargy, the former will quickly erect a standard for herself. Philosophy, wisdom, and liberty, support each other; he who will not reason is a bigot; he who cannot is a fool; and he who dares not, is a slave.' Is not the passage admirable?" continued Byron; "how few could have written it, and yet how few read Drummond's works! they are too good to be popular. His 'Odin' is really a fine poem, and has some passages that are beautiful, but it is so little read that it may be said to have dropped still-born from the press, a mortifying proof of the bad taste of the age. His translation of Persius is not only very literal, but preserves much of the spirit of the original; a merit that, let me tell you, is very rare at present, when translations have about as much of the spirit of the original as champagne diluted with three parts of water may be supposed to retain of the pure and sparkling wine.

"Translations, for the most part, resemble imitations, where the marked defects are exaggerated, and the beauties passed over, always excepting the imitations of Mathews," continued Byron, "who seems to have continuous chords in his mind, that vibrate to those in the minds of others, as he gives not only the look, tones, and manners of the persons he personifies, but the very train of thinking, and the expressions they indulge in; and, strange to say, this modern Proteus succeeds best when the imitated is a person of genius, or great talent, as he seems to identify himself with him. His imitation of Curran can hardly be so called—it is a *continuation*, and is inimitable. I remember Sir Walter Scott's observing, that Mathews' imitations were of the *mind*, to those who had the key; but as the majority had it not, they were contented with admiring those of the person, and pronounced him a mimic who ought to be considered an accurate and philosophic observer of human nature, blessed with the rare talent of intuitively identifying himself with the minds of others.

"But, to return to Sir William Drummond," continued Byron, "he has escaped all the defects of translators, and his Persius resembles the original as nearly in feeling and sentiment as two languages so dissimilar in idiom will admit. Translations almost always disappoint me; I

must, however, except Pope's 'Homer,' which has more of the spirit of Homer than all the other translations put together, and the Teian bard himself might have been proud of the beautiful odes which the Irish Anacreon has given us.*

"Of the wits about town, I think," said Byron, "that George Colman was one of the most agreeable; he was *toujours prêt*, and after two or three glasses of champagne, the quicksilver of his wit mounted to *beau fixe*. Colman has a good deal of tact; he feels that convivial hours were meant for enjoyment, and understands society so well, that he never obtrudes any private feeling, except hilarity, into it. His jokes are all good, and *readable*, and flow without effort, like the champagne that often gives birth to them, sparkle after sparkle, and brilliant to the last. Then one is sure of Colman," continued Byron, "which is a great comfort; for to be made to cry when one had made up one's mind to laugh, is a *triste* affair.† I remember

* The Honourable Henry Erskine produced the following lines after the publication of Moore's version of Anacreon's odes:

"Ah! mourn not for Anacreon dead;
Ah! weep not for Anacreon fled:
The lyre still breathes he touched before,
For we have one Anacreon Moore."

† Byron wrote in his "Journal": "If I had to *choose*, and could not have both at a time, I should say, 'Let me begin the evening with Sheridan and finish it with Colman.'" George Colman the

that this was the great drawback with Sheridan; a little wine made him melancholy, and his melancholy was contagious; for who could bear to see the wizard, who could at will command smiles or tears, yield to the latter, without sharing them, though one wished that the exhibition had been less public?

"My feelings were never more excited than while writing the Monody on Sheridan,—every word that I wrote came direct from the heart.*

younger, was born October 21, 1762, and died October 17, 1836. Like his father before him, he was a prolific playwright. He was manager for a time of the Haymarket Theatre; but riotous living led to his imprisonment for debt. On January 19th, 1824, he was appointed Examiner of Plays, and he displayed in that capacity a respect for public morals which he had not exhibited as a writer. He was intimate with Canning as well as Byron, and the "Rovers; or, The Double Arrangement," in the *Anti-Jacobin*, was the joint production of Canning and Colman.

* Monody on the Death of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan.

"When the last sunshine of expiring day
In Summer's twilight weeps itself away,
Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
Sink on the heart, as dew along the flower?
With a pure feeling which absorbs and awes,
While Nature makes that melancholy pause,
Her breathing moment on the bridge where Time
Of light and darkness forms an arch sublime,
Who hath not shared that calm so still and deep,
The voiceless thought which would not speak but weep,
A holy concord, and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set?

Poor Sherry! what a noble mind was in him overthrown by poverty! and to see the men with

'Tis not harsh sorrow, but a tenderer woe,
Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below,
Felt without bitterness, but full and clear,
A sweet dejection—a transparent tear,
Unmixed with worldly grief or selfish stain,
Shed without shame—a secret without pain.
Even as the tenderness that hour instils,
When Summer's day declines along the hills,
So feels the fulness of our hearts and eyes
When all of genius, which can perish, dies.
A mighty Spirit is eclipsed—a Power
Hath passed from day to darkness—to whose hour
Of light no darkness is bequeathed—no name,
Focus at once of all the rays of fame!
The flash of wit—the bright intelligence,
The beam of song—the blaze of eloquence,
Set with their sun—but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal mind;
Fruits of a genial morn, a glorious noon,
A deathless part of him who died too soon.
But small that portion of the wondrous whole,
These sparkling segments of that circling soul,
Which all embraced—and lightened over all,
To cheer—to pierce—to please—or to appal.
From the charmed council to the festive board,
Of human feelings the unbounded lord;
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied
The praised—the proud—who made his praise their pride
When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
The wrath—the delegated voice of God!
Which shook the nations through his lips—and blazed
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised.

whom he had passed his life, the dark souls whom his genius illumined, rolling in wealth,

And here, oh ! here, where yet all young and warm
The gay creations of his spirit charm,
The matchless dialogue—the deathless wit,
Which knew not what it was to intermit ;
The glowing portraits, fresh from life, that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring ;
These wondrous beings of his fancy, wrought
To fulness by the fiat of his thought,
Here in their first abode you still may meet,
Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat ;
A halo of the light of other days,
Which still the splendour of his orb betrays.
But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing wisdom yields a base delight,
Men who exalt when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own,
Still let them praise—ah ! little do they know
That what to them seemed vice might be but woe.
Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fixed for ever to detract or praise ;
Repose denies her requiem to his name
And folly loves the martyrdom of fame.
The secret enemy whose sleepless eye
Stands sentinel—accuser—judge—and spy,
The foe—the fool—the jealous—and the vain,
The envious who but breathe in others' pain,
Behold the host ! delighting to deprave,
Who track the steps of glory to the grave,
Watch every fault that daring genius owes
Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
And pile the pyramid of calumny !
These are his portion—but if joined to these
Gaunt poverty should league with deep disease,

the Sybarites whose slumbers a crushed rose-leaf would have disturbed, leaving him to die on the

If the high spirit must forget to soar,
And stoop and strive with misery at the door,
To soothe indignity—and face to face
Meet sordid rage—and wrestle with disgrace,
To find in hope but the renewed caress,
The serpent-fold of further faithlessness :—
If such may be the ills which men assail,
What marvel if at last the mightiest fail?
Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given
Bear hearts electric—charged with fire from Heaven,
Black with the rude collision, inly torn,
By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne,
Driven o'er the lowering atmosphere that nurst
Thoughts which have turned to thunder -scorch and burst
But far from us and from our mimic scene
Such things should be—if such have ever been :
Ours be the gentler wish, the kinder task,
To give the tribute glory need not ask,
To mourn the vanished beam —and add our mite
Of praise in payment of a long delight.
Ye Orators! whom yet our Councils yield,
Mourn for the veteran hero of your field !
The worthy rival of the wondrous *three !*
Whose words were sparks of immortality !
Ye bards! to whom the drama's muse is dear,
He was your master, emulate him here !
Ye men of wit and social eloquence !
He was your brother—bear his ashes hence !
While powers of mind almost of boundless range,
Complete in kind—as various in their change,
While Eloquence —Wit—Poesy—and Mirth,
That humble harmonist of Care on earth,
Survive within our souls—while lives our sense
Of pride in merit's proud pre-eminence.

pallet of poverty, his last moments disturbed by the myrmidons of the law. Oh! it was enough to disgust one with human nature, but above all with the nature of those who, professing liberality, were so little acquainted with its twin sister generosity.

"I have seen poor Sheridan weep, and good cause had he," continued Byron. "Placed by his transcendent talents in an elevated sphere, without the means of supporting the necessary appearance, to how many humiliations must his fine mind have submitted, ere he had arrived at the state in which I knew him, of reckless jokes to pacify creditors of a morning, and alternate smiles and tears of an evening, round the boards where ostentatious dulness called in his aid to give a zest to the wine that often maddened him, but could not thaw the frozen current of their blood. Moore's Monody on Sheridan," continued Byron, "was a fine burst of generous indignation, and is one of the most powerful of his compositions.* It was as daring as my

Long shall we seek his likeness—long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that Nature formed but one such man
And broke the die—in moulding Sheridan."

Byron's Works, edition 1832, pp. 313-319.

* Lines on the Death of Sheridan.

"Yes, grief will have way—but the fast-falling tear
Shall be mingled with deep execration on those
Who can bask in that spirit's meridian career
And yet leave it thus lonely and dark at its close:—

'Avatar,' which was bold enough, and, God knows, true enough, but I have never repented

"Whose vanity flew round him, only while fed
By the odour his fame in its summer-time gave ;—
Whose vanity now, with quick scent for the dead,
Like the ghoul of the East, comes to feed at his grave.

"Oh ! it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
And spirits so mean in the great and high-born ;
To think that a long line of titles may follow
The relics of him who died—friendless and lorn !

"How proud they can press to the funeral array
Of one who they shunned in his sickness and sorrow :
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow !

"And thou, too, whose life a sick epicure's dream,
Incoherent and gross, even grosser had passed,
Were it not for that cordial and soul-giving beam,
Which his friendship and wit o'er thy nothingness cast :—

"No, not for the wealth of the land, that supplies thee,
With millions to heap upon Foppery's shrine ;—
No, not for the riches of all who despise thee,
Though this would make Europe's whole opulence mine ;

"Would I suffer what—e'en in the heart that thou hast,
All mean as it is—must have consciously burned
When the pittance, which shame had wrung from thee at last
And which found all his wants at an end, was returned ;

"'Was *this* then the fate,'—future ages will say,
When *some* names will live but in history's curse,
When Truth will be heard, and these Lords of a day
Be forgotten as fools, or remembered as worse ;

"'Was this then the fate of that high-gifted man
The pride of the palace, the bower and the hall,
The orator—dramatist—minstrel—who ran
Through each mode of the lyre, and was master of all ;

it. Your countrymen behaved dreadfully on that occasion; despair may support the chains of tyranny, but it is only baseness that can sing and dance in them, as did the Irish on the King's visit. But I see you would prefer another subject, so let us talk of something else, though this cannot be a humiliating one to you personally, as I know your husband did not make one among the rabble at that Saturnalia.

"The Irish are strange people," continued Byron, "at one moment overpowered by sadness,

"'Whose mind was an essence, compounded with art
From the finest and best of all other men's powers:—
Who ruled like a wizard, the world of the heart,
And could call up its sunshine, or bring down its showers;

"'Whose humour as gay as the fire-fly's light
Played round every subject and shone as it played,
Whose wit in the combat, as gentle as bright,
Ne'er carried a heart-stain away on its blade:

"'Whose eloquence—brightening whatever it tried,
Whether reason or fancy, the gay or the grave,—
Was as rapid, as deep, and as brilliant a tide,
As ever bore Freedom aloft on its wave!'

"Yes—such was the man, and so wretched his fate;—
And thus, sooner or later, shall all have to grieve,
Who waste their morn's dew in the beams of the great,
And expect 'twill return to refresh them at eve.

"In the woods of the north there are insects that prey
On the brain of the elk till his very last sigh;
Oh, Genius! thy patrons, more cruel than they,
First feed on thy brains, and then leave thee to die!"

Moore's Poetical Works, edition 1851, pp. 400, 401.

and the next elevated to joy ; impressionable as heated wax, and like it changing each time that it is warmed. The dolphin, when shone upon by the sun, changes not its hues more frequently than do your mobile countrymen, and this want of stability will leave them long what centuries have found them—slaves. I liked them before the degradation of 1822, but the dance in chains disgusted me. What would Grattan and Curran have thought of it ? and Moore, why struck he not the harp of Erin to awaken the slumbering souls of his supine countrymen ?"

CHAPTER X.

Byron as a man—A difficult task—Byron's versatility—A false *beau idéal*—Lord Blessington—John Galt, a prolific author—The "Entail"—Shipmates—The milk of human kindness—Shelley's amiability—A "thorough-paced manœuvrer"—The beauty of age—A *donna* of forty-six—A landscape by Claude Lorraine—"Sentiment centred in wrinkles"—Moore "speaking roses"—His songs sung by himself—Byron's autobiography—Greek epigrams—Rogers's epigram on Ward—Byron's parsimony—His want of good taste—"Crede Byron."

To those who only know Byron as an author, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to convey a just impression of him as a man. In him the elements of good and evil were so strongly mixed, that an error could not be detected that was not allied to some good quality; and his fine qualities, and they were many, could hardly be separated from the faults that sullied them. In bestowing on Byron a genius as versatile as it was brilliant and powerful, Nature had not denied him warmth of heart, and the kind affections that beget, while they are formed to repay friendship; but a false *beau idéal* that he had created for himself, and a wish of exciting wonder, led him into a line of

conduct calculated to lower him in the estimation of superficial observers, who judge from appearances, while those who had opportunities of observing him more nearly, and who made allowance for his besetting sin, (the assumption of vices and errors, that he either had not, or exaggerated the appearance of,) found in him more to admire than censure, and to pity than condemn. In his severest satires, however much of malice there might be in the expression, there was little in the feeling that dictated them; they came from the imagination and not from the heart, for in a few minutes after he had unveiled the errors of some friends or acquaintances, he would call attention to some of their good qualities with as much apparent pleasure as he had dwelt on their defects.

A nearly daily intercourse of ten weeks with Byron left the impression on my mind, that if an extraordinary quickness of perception prevented his passing over the errors of those with whom he came in contact, and a natural incontinence of speech betrayed him into an exposure of them, a candour and good-nature, quite as remarkable, often led him to enumerate their virtues, and to draw attention to them. It may be supposed, that with such powerful talents, there was less excuse for the attacks he was in the habit of making on his friends and acquaintances; but

those very talents were the cause; they suggested a thousand lively and piquant images to his fancy, relative to the defects of those with whom he associated; and he had not self-command sufficient to repress the sallies that he knew must show at once his discrimination and talents for ridicule, and amuse his hearers, however they might betray a want of good-nature and sincerity.

There was no premeditated malignity in Byron's nature; though constantly in the habit of exposing the follies and vanity of his friends, I never heard him blacken their reputations, and I never felt an unfavourable impression from any of the censures he bestowed, because I saw they were aimed at follies, and not character. He used frequently to say that people hated him more for exposing their follies than if he had attacked their moral characters, adding, "Such is the vanity of human nature, that men would prefer being defamed to being ridiculed, and would much sooner pardon the first than the second. There is much more folly than vice in the world," said Byron. "The appearance of the latter is often assumed by the dictates of the former, and people pass for being vicious who are only foolish. I have seen such examples," continued he, "of this in the world, that it makes one rather incredulous as to the extent of actual vice; but I can believe anything of the capabilities of vanity and folly, having

witnessed to what length they can go. I have seen women compromise their honour (in appearance only) for the triumph (and a hopeful one) of rivalling some contemporary belle; and men sacrifice theirs, in reality, by false boastings for the gratification of vanity. All, all is vanity and vexation of spirit," added he; "the first being the legitimate parent of the second,—an offspring that, school it how you will, is sure to turn out a curse to its parent."

"Lord Blessington has been talking to me about Mr. Galt," said Lord Byron, "and tells me much good of him.* I am pleased at finding he is as amiable a man as his recent works prove him to be a clever and intelligent author. When I knew Galt, years ago, I was not in a frame of mind to form an impartial opinion of him; his mildness and equanimity struck me even then; but, to say the truth, his manner had not deference enough for my then aristocratical taste, and finding I could not awe him

* John Galt, born May 2nd, 1779, died April 11th, 1834, was the author of tragedies and books of travel, biographies and novels, his published works numbering forty-four. He was one of the few contemporaries of Sir Walter Scott whose works of fiction had a popularity nearly as great as his. "The Annals of the Parish," "The Provost," and "Sir Andrew Wylie" are the three which are best known and best worth reading. The second edition of that last named was dedicated to the Earl of Blessington, and a portrait of him was added. Galt was Byron's companion for a short time on his travels and wrote a life of him.

into a respect sufficiently profound for my sublime self, either as a peer or an author, I felt a little grudge towards him that has now completely worn off.

"There is a quaint humour and observance of character in his novels that interest me very much, and when he chooses to be pathetic he fools one to his bent, for I assure you the 'Entail' beguiled me of some portion of watery humours, yclept tears, 'albeit unused to the melting mood.' What I admire particularly in Galt's works," continued Byron, "is, that with a perfect knowledge of human nature and its frailties and legerdemain tricks, he shows a tenderness of heart which convinces one that *his* is in the right place, and he has a sly caustic humour that is very amusing. All that Lord Blessington has been telling me of Galt has made me reflect on the striking difference between his (Lord B.'s) nature and my own. I had an excellent opportunity of judging Galt, being shut up on board ship with him for some days; and though I saw he was mild, equable, and sensible, I took no pains to cultivate his acquaintance further than I should with any common-place person, which he was not; and Lord Blessington in London, with a numerous acquaintance, and 'all appliances to boot,' for choosing and selecting, has found so much to like in Galt, *malgré* the difference

of their politics, that his liking has grown into friendship.

"I must say that I never saw the milk of human kindness overflow in any nature to so great a degree as in Lord Blessington's," continued Byron. "I used, before I knew him well, to think that Shelley was the most amiable person I ever knew, but I now think that Lord B. bears off the palm, for he has been assailed by all the temptations that so few can resist, those of unvarying prosperity, and has passed the ordeal victoriously,—a triumphant proof of the extraordinary goodness of his nature, while poor Shelley had been tried in the school of adversity only, which is not such a corrupter as is that of prosperity. If Lord B. has not the power, Midas-like, of turning whatever he touches into gold," continued Byron, "he has at least that of turning all into good. I, alas! detect only the evil qualities of those that approach me, while he discovers the amiable. It appears to me, that the extreme excellence of his own disposition prevents his attributing evil to others; I do assure you," continued Byron, "I have thought better of mankind since I have known him intimately."

The earnestness of Byron's manner convinced me that he spoke his real sentiments relative to Lord B., and that his commendations were not

uttered with a view of gratifying me, but flowed spontaneously in the honest warmth of the moment. A long, daily and hourly knowledge of the person he praised, has enabled me to judge of the justice of the commendation, and Byron never spoke more truly than when he pronounced Lord B.'s a faultless nature. While he was speaking, he continually looked back, for fear that the person of whom he spoke should overhear his remarks, as he was riding behind, at a little distance from us.

"Is Lady —— as restless and indefatigable as ever? (asked Byron.)—She is an extraordinary woman, and the most thorough-paced manœuvrer I ever met with; she cannot make or accept an invitation, or perform any of the common courtesies of life, without manœuvring, and has always some plan in agitation, to which all her acquaintance are made subservient. This is so evident, that she never approached me that I did not expect her to levy contributions on my muse, the only disposable property I possessed; and I was as surprised as grateful at finding it was not pressed into the service for compassing some job, or accomplishing some mischief. Then she passes for being clever, when she is only cunning: her life has been passed in giving the best proof of want of cleverness, that of intriguing to carry points not worth intriguing for, and that must

have occurred in the natural course of events without any manœuvring on her part. Cleverness and cunning are incompatible—I never saw them united; the latter is the resource of the weak, and is only natural to them: children and fools are always cunning, but clever people never. The world, or rather the persons who compose it, are so indolent, that when they see great personal activity, joined to indefatigable and unshrinking exertion of tongue, they conclude that such effects must proceed from adequate causes, never reflecting that real cleverness requires not such aids; but few people take the trouble of analyzing the actions or motives of others, and least of all when such others have no envy-stirring attractions. On this account Lady ——'s manœuvres are set down to cleverness; but when she was young and pretty they were less favourably judged.

"Women of a certain age (continued Byron) are for the most part bores or *méchantes*. I have known some delightful exceptions, but on consideration they were past the certain age, and were no longer, like the coffin of Mahomet, hovering between heaven and earth, that is to say, floating between maturity and age, but had fixed their persons on the unpretending easy chairs of *vieillesse*, and their thoughts neither on war nor conquest, except the conquest of self.

Age is beautiful when no attempt is made to modernize it. Who can look at the interesting remains of loveliness without some of the same tender feelings of melancholy with which we regard a fine ruin? Both mark the triumph of the mighty conqueror Time; and whether we examine the eyes, the windows of the soul, through which love and hope once sparkled, now dim and languid, showing only resignation, or the ruined casements of the abbey or castle through which blazed the light of tapers, and the smoke of incense offered to the Deity, the feelings excited are much the same, and we approach both with reverence,—always (interrupted Byron) provided that the old beauty is not a specimen of the florid Gothic,—by which I mean restored, painted, and varnished,—and that the abbey or castle is not whitewashed; both, under such circumstances, produce the same effect on me, and all reverence is lost; but I do seriously admire age when it is not ashamed to let itself be seen, and look on it as something sanctified and holy, having passed through the fire of its passions, and being on the verge of the grave.

"I once (said Byron) found it necessary to call up all that could be said in favour of matured beauty, when my heart became captive to a *donna* of forty-six, who certainly excited as lively a passion in my breast as ever it has known; and

even now the autumnal charms of Lady —— are remembered by me with more than admiration. She resembled a landscape by Claude Lorraine, with a setting sun, her beauties enhanced by the knowledge that they were shedding their last dying beams, which threw a radiance around. A woman (continued Byron) is only grateful for her *first* and *last* conquest. The first of poor dear Lady ——'s was achieved before I entered on this world of care, but the *last* I do flatter myself was reserved for me, and a *bonne bouche* it was."

I told Byron that his poetical sentiments of the attractions of matured beauty had, at the moment, suggested four lines to me; which he begged me to repeat, and he laughed not a little when I recited the following lines to him:—

"Oh! talk not to me of the charms of youth's dimples,
There's surely more sentiment centred in wrinkles.
They're the triumphs of time that mark beauty's decay,
Telling tales of years past, and the few left to stay."

"I never spent an hour with Moore (said Byron) without being ready to apply to him the expression attributed to Aristophanes, 'You have spoken roses;' his thoughts and expressions have all the beauty and freshness of those flowers, but the piquancy of his wit, and the readiness of his

repartees, prevent one's ear being cloyed by too much sweets, and one cannot 'die of a rose in aromatic pain' with Moore, though he does speak roses, there is such an endless variety in his conversation. Moore is the only poet I know (continued Byron) whose conversation equals his writings; he comes into society with a mind as fresh and buoyant as if he had not expended such a multiplicity of thoughts on paper; and leaves behind him an impression that he possesses an inexhaustible mine equally brilliant as the specimens he has given us. Will you, after this frank confession of my opinion of your countryman, ever accuse me of injustice again? You see I can render justice when I am not forced into its opposite extreme by hearing people overpraised, which always awakes the sleeping Devil in my nature, as witness the desperate attack I gave your friend Lord —— the other day, merely because you all wanted to make me believe he was a model, which he is not; though I admit he is not *all* or *half* that which I accused him of being. Had you dispraised, probably I should have defended him."

"I will give you some stanzas I wrote yesterday (said Byron); they are as simple as even Wordsworth himself could write, and would do for music."

The following are the lines :—

"To ———

"But once I dared to lift my eyes—
To lift my eyes to thee;
And since that day, beneath the skies,
No other sight they see.

"In vain sleep shuts them in the night—
The night grows day to me;
Presenting idly to my sight
What still a dream must be.

"A fatal dream—for many a bar
Divides thy fate from mine;
And still my passions wake and war,
But peace be still with thine."

"No one writes songs like Moore (said Byron). Sentiment and imagination are joined to the most harmonious versification, and I know no greater treat than to hear him sing his own compositions; the powerful expression he gives to them, and the pathos of the tones of his voice, tend to produce an effect on my feelings that no other songs, or singer, ever could. —— —— used to write pretty songs, and certainly has talent, but I maintain there is more poesy in her prose, at least more fiction, than is to be met with in a folio of poetry. You look shocked at what you think my ingratitude towards her, but if you knew half the cause I have to dislike her, you would not condemn me. You shall, however, know some parts of that serio-comic drama, in which I was forced to play a part; and, if you listen with

candour, you must allow I was more sinned against than sinning."

The curious history that followed this preface is not intended for the public eye, as it contains anecdotes and statements that are calculated to give pain to several individuals—the same feeling that dictates the suppression of this most curious episode in Byron's London life, has led to the suppression of many other piquant and amusing disclosures made by him, as well as some of the most severe poetical portraits that ever were drawn of some of his supposed friends, and many of his acquaintances. The vigour with which they are sketched proves that he entered into every fold of the characters of the originals, and that he painted them *con amore*, but he could not be accused of being a flattering portrait painter.

The disclosures made by Byron could never be considered *confidential*, because they were always at the service of the first listener who fell in his way, and who happened to know anything of the parties he talked of. They were not confided with any injunction to secrecy, but were indiscriminately made to his chance companions,—nay, he often declared his decided intention of writing copious notes to the Life he had given to his friend Moore, in which *the whole truth* should be declared of, for, and against, himself and others.

Talking of this gift to Mr. Moore, he asked me if it had made a great sensation in London, and whether people were not greatly alarmed at the thoughts of being shown up in it. He seemed much pleased in anticipating the panic it would occasion, naming all the persons who would be most alarmed.

I told him he had rendered the most essential service to the cause of morality by his confessions, as a dread of similar disclosures would operate more strongly in putting people on their guard in reposing dangerous confidence in men, than all the homilies that ever were written ; and that people would in future be warned by the phrase of "beware of being *Byroned*," instead of the old cautions used in past times. "This (continued I) is a sad antithesis to your motto of *Crede Byron*." He appeared vexed at my observations, and it struck me that he seemed uneasy and out of humour for the next half-hour of our ride. I told him that his gift to Moore had suggested to me the following lines :—

"The ancients were famed for their friendship we're told,
Witness Damon and Pythias, and others of old ;
But, Byron, 'twas thine friendship's power to extend,
Who surrendered thy Life for the sake of a friend."

He laughed heartily at the lines, and, in laughing at them, recovered his good-humour.

"I have never," said Byron, "succeeded to my

satisfaction in an epigram; my attempts have not been happy, and knowing Greek as I do, and admiring the Greek epigrams, which excel all others, it is mortifying that I have not succeeded better: but I begin to think that epigrams demand a peculiar talent, and that talent I decidedly have not. One of the best in the English language is that of Rogers on Ward; it has the true Greek talent of expressing by implication what is wished to be conveyed.

> "Ward has no heart, they say; but I deny it;
> He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it."

This is the *ne plus ultra* of English epigrams." I told Byron that I had copied Rogers's thought, in two lines on an acquaintance of mine, as follows:

> "The charming Mary has no mind they say;
> I prove she has—it changes every day."

This amused him, and he repeated several epigrams, very clever, but which are too severe to be given in these pages. The epigrams of Byron are certainly not equal to his other poetry, they are merely clever, and such as any person of talent might have written, but who except him, in our day, could have written Childe Harold? No one; for admitting that the same talent exists, (which I am by no means prepared to admit) the possessor must have experienced the

same destiny, to have brought it to the same perfection.

The reverses that nature and circumstances entailed on Byron served but to give a higher polish and a finer temper to his genius. All that marred the perfectibility of the man, had perfected the poet, and this must have been evident to those who approached him, though it had escaped his own observation. Had the choice been left him, I am quite sure he would not have hesitated a moment in choosing the renown of the poet, even at the price of the happiness of the man, as he lived much more in the future than in the present, as do all persons of genius. As it was, he felt dissatisfied with his position, without feeling that it was the whetstone that sharpened his powers; for with all his affected philosophy, he was a philosopher but in theory, and never reduced it to practice.

One of the strangest anomalies in Byron was the exquisite taste displayed in his descriptive poetry, and the total want of it that was so visible in his modes of life. Fine scenery seemed to produce little effect on his feelings, though his descriptions are so glowing, and the elegancies and comforts of refined life he appeared to as little understand as value. This last did not arise from a contempt of them, as might be imagined, but from an ignorance of what consti-

tuted them. I have seen him apparently delighted with the luxurious inventions in furniture, equipages, plate, etc., common to all persons of a certain station or fortune, and yet after an inquiry as to their prices—an inquiry so seldom made by persons of his rank—shrink back alarmed at the thought of the expense, though there was nothing alarming in it, and congratulate himself that he had no such luxuries, or did not require them.

I should say that a bad and vulgar taste predominated in all Byron's equipments, whether in dress or in furniture. I saw his bed at Genoa, when I passed through in 1826, and it certainly was the most gaudily vulgar thing I ever saw; the curtains in the worst taste, and the cornice having his family motto of "Crede Byron" surmounted by baronial coronets. His carriages and his liveries were in the same bad taste, having an affectation of finery, but *mesquin* in the details, and tawdry in the *ensemble;* and it was evident that he piqued himself on them, by the complacency with which they were referred to. These trifles are touched upon, as being characteristic of the man, and would have been passed by, as unworthy of notice, had he not shown that they occupied a considerable portion of his attention. He has even asked us if they were not rich and handsome, and then remarked that no wonder they were so, as they cost him a

great deal of money. At such moments it was difficult to remember that one was speaking to the author of "Childe Harold."

If the poet was often forgotten in the levities of the man, the next moment some original observation, cutting repartee, or fanciful simile, reminded one that he who could be ordinary in trifles, (the only points of assimilation between him and the common herd of men,) was only ordinary when he descended to their level; but when once on subjects worthy his attention, the great poet shone forth, and they who had felt self-complacency at noting the futilities that had lessened the distance between him and them, were forced to see the immeasurable space which separated them, when he allowed his genius to be seen. It is only Byron's pre-eminence as a poet that can give interest to such details as the writer has entered into: if they are written without partiality, they are also given in no unfriendly spirit; but his defects are noted with the same feeling with which an astronomer would remark the specks that are visible even in the brightest stars, which having examined more minutely than common observers, he wishes to give others the advantage of his discoveries, though the specks he describes have not made him overlook the brightness of the luminaries they sullied, but could not obscure.

"You know ——, of course, (said Byron,) everyone does. I hope you don't like him; water and oil are not more antipathetic than he and I are to each other. I admit that his abilities are great; they are of the very first order; but he has that which almost always accompanies great talents, and generally proves a counter-balance to them—an overweening ambition, which renders him not over-nice about the means, as long as he attains the end; and this facility will prevent his ever being a truly great man, though it may abridge his road to what is considered greatness—official dignity. You shall see some verses in which I have not spared him, and yet I have only said what I believe to be strictly correct. Poets are said to succeed best in fiction; but this I deny; at least I always write best when truth inspires me, and my satires, which are founded on truth, have more spirit than all my other productions, for they were written *con amore*. My intimacy with the —— family (continued Byron) let me into many of ——'s secrets, and they did not raise him in my estimation."

CHAPTER XI.

Lords Holland and Erskine—Walter Savage Landor—Byron's mode of wreaking vengeance—La Marquise du Deffand—The Lake School—Ladies' poetry—Voltaire on authors—An interesting folio—Society *versus* law—"A fellow-feeling makes them wondrous kind"—Buxom health and lanky languor—Ladies *à la Rubens*—"*Mens sana in corpore sano*"—The price of fame—The best legacy—A French proverb—"Love is only curiosity"—Count d'Orsay's journal—The secret of English *ennui*—Slaves of fashion—Creatures of circumstance—Lady Melbourne—Women's hearts.

"One of the few persons in London, whose society served to correct my predisposition to misanthropy, was Lord Holland.* There is

* Henry Richard Vassall Fox, third Lord Holland, was born November 21st, 1773, and died October 22nd, 1840. He was an eminent Whig and as a great a lover of literature as his uncle, Charles James Fox. He held the office of Lord Privy Seal in the Administration of All the Talents, and that of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the Administration of Earl Grey and Viscount Melbourne. The most noteworthy works from his pen were translations from the Spanish, published when a young man, and "Memoirs of the Whig Party," the production of his mature years. During his lifetime Holland House was the meeting place of Liberal politicians and men of letters, and its influence is set forth in Macaulay's essay upon it. The personal ambition of Lord

more benignity, and a greater share of the milk of human kindness in his nature than in that of any man I know, always excepting Lord Blessington. Then there is such a charm in his manners, his mind is so highly cultivated, his conversation so agreeable, and his temper so equal and bland, that he never fails to send away his guests content with themselves and delighted with him. I never (continued Byron) heard a difference of opinion about Lord Holland; and I am sure no one could know him without liking him. Lord Erskine, in talking to me of Lord Holland, observed, that it was his extreme good-nature alone that prevented his taking as high a political position as his talents entitled him to fill. This quality (continued Byron) will never prevent ——'s rising in the world; so that his talents will have a fair chance.

"It is difficult (said Byron) when one detests an author not to detest his works. There are some that I dislike so cordially, that I am aware of my incompetency to give an impartial opinion of their writings. Southey, *par exemple*, is one of

Holland is expressed in the following lines in his handwriting which were found after his death:

"Nephew of Fox, and friend of Grey,
Enough my meed of fame,
If those who deigned to observe me say
I injured neither name."

these. When travelling in Italy, he was reported to me as having circulated some reports much to my disadvantage, and still more to that of two ladies of my acquaintance; all of which, through the kind medium of some good-natured friends, were brought to my ears; and I have vowed eternal vengeance against him, and all who uphold him; which vengeance has been poured forth, in phials of wrath, in the shape of epigrams and lampoons, some of which you shall see. When anyone attacks me, on the spur of the moment I sit down and write all the *méchanceté* that comes into my head; and, as some of these sallies have merit, they amuse me, and are too good to be torn or burned, and so are kept, and see the light long after the feeling that dictated them has subsided. All my malice evaporates in the effusions of my pen: but I dare say those that excite it would prefer any other mode of vengeance.

"At Pisa, a friend told me that Walter Savage Landor had declared he either would not, or could not, read my works. I asked my officious friend if he was sure which it was that Landor said, as the *would not* was not offensive, and the *could not* was highly so. After some reflection, he, of course *en ami*, chose the most disagreeable signification; and I marked down Landor in the tablet of memory as a person to whom a *coup-de-*

patte must be given in my forthcoming work, though he really is a man whose brilliant talents and profound erudition I cannot help admiring as much as I respect his character—various proofs of the generosity, manliness, and independence of which has reached me; so you see I can render justice (*en petite comité*) even to a man who says he could not read my works; this, at least, shows some good feeling, if the *petit* vengeance of attacking him in my work cannot be defended; but my attacking proves the truth of the observation made by a French writer—that we don't like people for the merit we discover in them, but for that which they find in us."

When Byron was one day abusing —— most vehemently, we accused him of undue severity; and he replied, he was only deterred from treating him much more severely by the fear of being indicted under the Act of Cruelty to Animals!

"I am quite sure (said Byron) that many of our worst actions and our worst thoughts are caused by friends. An enemy can never do as much injury, or cause as much pain: if he speaks ill of one, it is set down as an exaggeration of malice, and therefore does little harm, and he has no opportunity of telling one any of the disagreeable things that are said in one's absence; but a friend has such an amiable candour in

admitting the faults least known, and often unsuspected, and of denying or defending with *acharnement* those that can neither be denied nor defended, that he is sure to do one mischief. Then he thinks himself bound to retail and detail every disagreeable remark or story he hears, and generally under the injunction of secrecy; so that one is tormented without the power of bringing the slanderer to account, unless by a breach of confidence. I am always tempted to exclaim, with Socrates, 'My friends! there are no friends!' when I hear and see the advantages of friendship.

"It is odd (continued Byron) that people do not seem aware that the person who repeats to a friend an offensive observation, uttered when he was absent, without any idea that he was likely to hear it, is much more blamable than the person who originally said it; of course I except a friend who hears a charge brought against one's honour, and who comes and openly states what he has heard, that it may be refuted: but this friends seldom do; for, as that Queen of egoists, La Marquise du Deffand, truly observed—'Ceux qu'on nomme amis sont ceux par qui on n'a pas à craindre d'être assassiné, mais qui laisseroient faire les assassins.' Friends are like diamonds; all wish to possess them: but few can or will pay their price; and there never was more

wisdom embodied in a phrase than in that which says—'Defend me from my friends, and I will defend myself from my enemies.'"

Talking of poetry, (Byron said) that "next to the affected simplicity of the Lake School, he disliked prettinesses, or what are called flowers of poetry; they are only admissible in the poetry of ladies, (said he,) which should always have a sprinkling of dew-gemmed leaves and flowers of rainbow hues, with tuneful birds and gorgeous butterflies——" Here he laughed like a child, and added, "I suppose you would never forgive me if I finished the sentence,—sweet emblems of fair woman's looks and mind." Having joined in the laugh, which was irresistible from the mock heroic air he assumed, I asked him how he could prove any resemblance between tuneful birds, gorgeous butterflies, and woman's face or mind. He immediately replied, "Have I not printed a certain line, in which I say, 'the music breathing from her face'? and do not all, even philosophers, assert, that there is harmony in beauty, nay, that there is no beauty without it? Now tuneful birds are musical; *ergo*, that simile holds good as far as the face, and the butterfly must stand for the mind, brilliant, light, and wandering. I say nothing of its being the emblem of the soul, because I have not quite made up my mind that women have souls; but, in short,

flowers and all that is fragile and beautiful must remind one of women. So do not be offended with my comparison.

"But to return to the subject, (continued Byron,) you do not, cannot like what are called flowers in poetry. I try to avoid them as much as possible in mine, and I hope you think that I have succeeded." I answered that he had given oaks to Parnassus instead of flowers, and while disclaiming the compliment it seemed to gratify him.

"A successful work (said Byron) makes a man a wretch for life: it engenders in him a thirst for notoriety and praise, that precludes the possibility of repose; this spurs him on to attempt others, which are always expected to be superior to the first; hence arises disappointment, as expectation being too much excited is rarely gratified, and, in the present day, one failure is placed as a counterbalance to fifty successful efforts. Voltaire was right (continued Byron) when he said that the fate of a literary man resembled that of the flying-fish; if he dives in the water the fish devour him, and if he rises in the air he is attacked by the birds. Voltaire (continued Byron) had personal experience of the persecution a successful author must undergo; but *malgré* all this, he continued to keep alive the sensation he had excited in the literary world, and, while at Ferney, thought only

of astonishing Paris. Montesquieu has said 'that *moins on pense plus on parle*.' Voltaire was a proof, indeed I have known many (said Byron), of the falseness of this observation, for who ever wrote or talked as much as Voltaire? But Montesquieu, when he wrote his remark, thought not of literary men; he was thinking of the *bavards* of society, who certainly think less and talk more than all others. I was once very much amused (said Byron) by overhearing the conversation of two country ladies, in company with a celebrated author, who happened to be that evening very taciturn: one remarked to the other, how strange it was that a person reckoned so clever, should be so silent! and the other answered, Oh! he has nothing left to say, he has sold all his thoughts to his publishers. This you will allow was a philosophical way of explaining the silence of an author.

"One of the things that most annoyed me in London (said Byron) was the being continually asked to give my opinion on the works of contemporaries. I got out of the difficulty as well as I could, by some equivocal answer that might be taken in two ways; but even this prudence did not save me, and I have been accused of envy and jealousy of authors, of whose works, God knows, I was far from being envious. I have also been suspected of jealousy towards ancient

as well as modern writers; but Pope, whose poems I really envy, and whose works I admire, perhaps more than any living or dead English writer, they have never found out that I was jealous of, nay, probably, as I always praise him, they suppose I do not seriously admire him, as insincerity on all points is universally attributed to me.

"I have often thought of writing a book to be filled with all the charges brought against me in England (said Byron); it would make an interesting folio, with my notes, and might serve posterity as a proof of the charity, good-nature, and candour of Christian England in the nineteenth century. Our laws are bound to think a man innocent until he is proved to be guilty; but our English society condemns him before trial, which is a summary proceeding that saves trouble.

"However, I must say, (continued Byron,) that it is only those to whom any superiority is accorded, that are prejudged or treated with undue severity in London, for mediocrity meets with the utmost indulgence, on the principle of sympathy, 'a fellow-feeling makes them wondrous kind.' The moment my wife left me, I was assailed by all the falsehoods that malice could invent or slander publish; how many wives have since left their husbands, and husbands their

wives, without either of the parties being blackened by defamation, the public having the sense to perceive that a husband and wife's living together or separate can only concern the parties, or their immediate families! but in *my case*, no sooner did Lady Byron take herself off than my character went off, or rather was carried off, not by force of arms, but by force of tongues and pens too; and there was no crime too dark to be attributed to me by the moral English, to account for so very common an occurrence as a separation in high life.

"I was thought a devil, because Lady Byron was allowed to be an angel; and that it formed a pretty antithesis, *mais hélas!* there are neither angels nor devils on earth, though some of one's acquaintance might tempt one into the belief of the existence of the latter. After twenty, it is difficult to believe in that of the former, though the *first* and *last* objects of one's affection have some of its attributes. Imagination (said Byron) resembles hope—when unclouded, it gilds all that it touches with its own bright hue: mine makes me see beauty wherever youth and health have impressed their stamp; and after all I am not very far from the goddess, when I am with her handmaids, for such they certainly are. Sentimentalists may despise 'buxom health, with rosy hue,' which has something dairy-maid like, I

confess, in the sound, (continued he)—for buxom, however one may like the reality, is not euphonious, but I have the association of plumpness, rosy hue, good spirits, and good humour, all brought before me in the homely phrase; and all these united give me a better idea of beauty than lanky languor, sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, and bad health, and bad humour, which are synonymous, making to-morrow cheerless as to-day. Then see some of our fine ladies, whose nerves are more active than their brains, who talk sentiment, and ask you to 'administer to a mind diseased, and pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,' when it is the body that is diseased, and the rooted sorrow is some chronic malady: these, I own (continued Byron), alarm me, and a delicate woman, however prettily it may sound, harrows up my feelings with a host of shadowy ills to come, of vapours, hysterics, nerves, megrims, intermitting fevers, and all the ills that wait upon poor *weak* women, who, when sickly, are generally weak in more senses than one.

"The best dower a woman can bring is health and good humour; the latter, whatever we may say of the triumphs of mind, depends on the former, as, according to the old poem—

"'Temper ever waits on health,
As luxury depends on wealth.'

But mind (said Byron) when I object to delicate women, that is to say, to women of delicate health, *alias* sickly, I don't mean to say that I like coarse, fat ladies, *à la Rubens*, whose minds must be impenetrable, from the mass of matter in which they are incased. No! I like an active and healthy mind, in an active and healthy person, each extending its beneficial influence over the other, and maintaining their equilibrium, the body illumined by the light within, but that light not let out by any 'chinks made by time;'* in short, I like, as who does not, (continued Byron,) a handsome healthy woman, with an intelligent and intelligible mind, who can do something more than what is said a French woman can only do, *habille*, *babille*, and *dishabille*, who is not obliged to have recourse to dress, shopping and visits, to get through a day, and soirées, operas, and flirting to pass an evening. You see, I am moderate in my desires; I only wish for perfection.

"There was a time (said Byron) when fame appeared the most desirable of all acquisitions to me; it was my 'being's end and aim,' but now—how worthless does it appear! Alas! how true are the lines—

* "The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made."
WALLER.

" 'La Nominanza è color d'erba,
Che viene e và; e quei la discolora
Per cui vien fuori della terra acerba.'

And dearly is fame bought, as all have found who have acquired even a small portion of it,—

" 'Che seggendo in piuma
In Fama non si vien, ne sotto coltre.'

No! with sleepless nights, excited nerves, and morbid feelings, is fame purchased, and envy, hatred, and jealousy follow the luckless possessor.

" 'O ciechi, il tanto affaticar che giova?
Tutti tornate alla gran madre antica,
E il vostro nome appena si ritrova.'

Nay, how often has a tomb been denied to those whose names have immortalized their country, or else granted when shame compelled the tardy justice! Yet, after all, fame is but like all other pursuits, ending in disappointment—its worthlessness only discovered when attained, and

" 'Sensa la qual chi sua vita consuma
Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia
Qual fummo in aere, ed in acqua la schiuma.'

" People complain of the brevity of life, (said Byron,) should they not rather complain of its length, as its enjoyments cease long before the halfway-house of life is passed, unless one has the luck to die young, ere the illusions that render existence supportable have faded away,

and are replaced by experience, that dull monitress, that ever comes too late? While youth steers the bark of life, and passion impels her on, experience keeps aloof; but when youth and passion are fled, and we no longer require her aid, she comes to reproach us with the past, to disgust us with the present, and to alarm us with the future."

"We buy wisdom with happiness, and who would purchase it at such a price? To be happy, we must forget the past, and think not of the future; and who that has a soul, or mind, can do this? No one (continued Byron); and this proves, that those who have either, know no happiness on this earth. Memory precludes happiness, whatever Rogers may say to the contrary, for it borrows from the past, to embitter the present, bringing back to us all the grief that has most wounded, or the happiness that has most charmed us; the first leaving its sting, and of the second,—

> "'Nessun maggior dolore,
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice,
> Nella miseria.'*

Let us look back (continued Byron) to those days of grief, the recollection of which now pains us, and we shall find that time has only cicatrized,

* "Inferno," Canto V., lines 121-123.

but not effaced the scars; and if we reflect on the happiness, that seen through the vista of the past seems now so bright, memory will tell us that, at the actual time referred to, we were far from thinking so highly of it, nay,—that at that very period we were obliged to draw drafts on the future, to support the then present, though now that epoch, tinged by the rays of memory, seems so brilliant, and renders the present more sombre by contrast.

"We are so constituted (said Byron) that we know not the value of our possessions until we have lost them. Let us think of the friends that death has snatched from us, whose loss has left aching voids in the heart never again to be filled up; and memory will tell us that we prized not their presence, while we were blessed with it, though, could the grave give them back, now that we had learnt to estimate their value, all else could be borne, and we believe (because it is impossible) that happiness might once more be ours. We should live with our friends, (said Byron,) not as the worldly-minded philosopher says, as though they may one day become our enemies, but as though we may one day lose them; and this maxim, strictly followed, will not only render our lives happier while together, but will save the survivors from those bitter pangs that memory conjures up, of slights and un-

kindnesses offered to those we have lost, when too late for atonement, arming remorse with double force because it is too late."

It was in such conversations that Byron was seen in his natural character; the feeling, the tenderness of his nature shone forth at such moments, and his natural character, like the diamond when breathed upon, though dimmed for a time, soon recovered its purity, and showed its original lustre, perhaps the more for having been for a moment obscured.

How much has Byron to unlearn ere he can hope for peace! Then he is proud of his false knowledge. I call it false, because it neither makes him better nor happier, and true knowledge ought to do the former, though I admit it cannot the latter. We are not relieved by the certainty that we have an incurable disease; on the contrary, we cease to apply remedies, and so let the evil increase. So it is with human nature: by believing ourselves devoted to selfishness, we supinely sink into its withering and inglorious thraldom; when, by encouraging kindly affections, without analyzing their source, we strengthen and fix them in the heart, and find their genial influence extending around, contributing to the happiness and well-being of others, and reflecting back some portion on ourselves.

Byron's heart is running to waste for want of

being allowed to expend itself on his fellow-creatures; it is naturally capacious, and teeming with affection; but the worldly wisdom he has acquired has checked its course, and it preys on his own happiness by reminding him continually of the aching void in his breast. With a contemptible opinion of human nature, he requires a perfectibility in the persons to whom he attaches himself, that those who think most highly of it never expect: he gets easily disgusted, and when once the persons fall short of his expectations, his feelings are thrown back on himself, and, in their re-action, create new bitterness.

I have remarked to Byron that it strikes me as a curious anomaly, that he, who thinks ill of mankind, should require more from it than do those who think well of it *en masse;* and that each new disappointment at discovery of baseness sends him back to solitude with some of the feelings with which a savage creature would seek its lair; while those who judge it more favourably, instead of feeling bitterness at the disappointments we must all experience, more or less, when we have the weakness to depend wholly on others for happiness, smile at their own delusion, and blot out, as with a sponge, from memory that such things were, and were most sweet while we believed them, and open a fresh account, a new leaf in the ledger of life, always indulging in

the hope that it may not be balanced like the last.

We should judge others not by self, for that is deceptive, but by their general conduct and character. We rarely do this, because with that *le besoin d'aimer*, which all ardent minds have, we bestow our affections on the first person that chance throws in our path, and endow them with every good and noble quality, which qualities were unknown to them, and only existed in our own imaginations.

We discover, when too late, our own want of discrimination; but, instead of blaming ourselves, we throw the whole censure on those whom we had overrated, and declare war against the whole species because we had chosen ill, and "loved not wisely, but too well." When such disappointments occur,—and, alas! they are so frequent as to inure us to them,—if we were to reflect on all the antecedent conduct and modes of thinking of those in whom we had "garnered up our hearts," we should find that *they* were in general consistent, and that *we* had indulged erroneous expectations, from having formed too high an estimate of them, and consequently were disappointed.

A modern writer has happily observed that "the sourest disappointments are made out of our sweetest hopes, as the most excellent vinegar

is made from damaged wine." We have all proved that hope ends but in frustration, but this should only give us a more humble opinion of our own powers of discrimination, instead of making us think ill of human nature: we may believe that goodness, disinterestedness, and affection exist in the world, although we have not had the good fortune to encounter them in the persons on whom we had lavished our regard. This is the best, because it is the safest and most consolatory philosophy; it prevents our thinking ill of our species, and precludes that corroding of our feelings which is the inevitable result; for as we all belong to the family of human nature, we cannot think ill of it without deteriorating our own.

If we have had the misfortune to meet with some persons whose ingratitude and baseness might serve to lower our opinion of our fellow-creatures, have we not encountered others whose nobleness, generosity, and truth might redeem them? A few such examples,—nay, one alone,—such as I have had the happiness to know, taught me to judge favourably of mankind; and Byron, with all his scepticism as to the perfectibility of human nature, allowed that the person to whom I allude was an exception to the rule of the belief he had formed as to selfishness or worldly-mindedness being the spring of action in man.

The grave has closed over *him* who shook Byron's scepticism in perfect goodness, and established for ever my implicit faith in it; but, in the debts of gratitude engraved in deep characters on memory, the impression his virtues have given me of human nature is indelibly registered,—an impression of which his conduct was the happiest illustration, as the recollection of it must ever be the antidote to misanthropy. We have need of such examples to reconcile us to the heartless ingratitude that all have, in a greater or less degree, been exposed to, and which is so calculated to disgust us with our species. How, then, must the heart reverence the memory of those who, in life, spread the shield of their goodness between us and sorrow and evil, and, even in death, have left us the hallowed recollection of their virtues, to enable us to think well of our fellow-creatures!

> "Of the rich legacies the dying leave,
> Remembrance of their virtues is the best."

We are as posterity to those who have gone before us—the *avant-couriers* on that journey that we must all undertake. It is permitted us to speak of *absent* friends with the honest warmth of commendatory truth; then surely we may claim that privilege for the *dead*,—a privilege which every grateful heart must pant to establish,

when the just tribute we pay to departed worth is but as the outpouring of a spirit that is overpowered by its own intensity, and whose praise or blame falls equally unregarded on "the dull cold ear of death." They who are in the grave cannot be flattered; and if their qualities were such as escaped the observance of the public eye, are not those who, in the shade of domestic privacy, had opportunities of appreciating them, entitled to one of the few consolations left to survivors—that of offering the homage of admiration and praise to virtues that were beyond all praise, and goodness that, while in existence, proved a source of happiness, and, in death, a consolation, by the assurance they have given of meeting their reward?

Byron said to-day that he had met, in a French writer, an idea that had amused him very much, and that he thought had as much truth as originality in it: he quoted the passage, "La curiosité est suicide de sa nature, et l'amour n'est que la curiosité." He laughed, and rubbed his hands, and repeated, "Yes, the Frenchman is right. Curiosity kills itself; and love is only curiosity, as is proved by its end."

I told Byron that it was in vain that he affected to believe what he repeated, as I thought too well of him to imagine him to be serious.

"At all events," said Byron, "you must admit

that, of all passions, love is the most selfish. It begins, continues, and ends in selfishness. Who ever thinks of the happiness of the object apart from his own, or who attends to it? While the passion continues, the lover wishes the object of his attachment happy, because, were she visibly otherwise, it would detract from his own pleasures. The French writer understood mankind well, who said that they resembled the Grand Turk in an opera, who, quitting his sultana for another, replied to her tears, 'Dissimulez votre peine, et respectez mes plaisirs.' This," continued Byron, "is but too true a satire on men; for when love is over,

> "A few years older,
> Ah! how much colder
> He could behold her
> For whom he sigh'd!

"Depend on it, my doggerel rhymes have more truth than most that I have written. I have been told that love never exists without jealousy; if this be true, it proves that love must be founded on selfishness, for jealousy surely never proceeds from any other feeling than selfishness. We see that the person we like is pleased and happy in the society of someone else, and we prefer to see her unhappy with us, than to allow her to enjoy it: is not this selfish? Why is it," continued Byron, "that lovers are at first only happy in

each other's society? It is, that their mutual flattery and egoism gratify their vanity; and not finding this stimulus elsewhere, they become dependent on each other for it. When they get better acquainted, and have exhausted all their compliments, without the power of creating or feeling any new illusions, or even continuing the old, they no longer seek each other's presence from preference; habit alone draws them together, and they drag on a chain that is tiresome to both, but which often neither has the courage to break.

"We have all a certain portion of love in our natures, which portion we invariably bestow on the object that most charms us, which, as invariably, is self; and though some degree of love may be extended to another, it is only because that other administers to our vanity; and the sentiment is but a reaction,—a sort of electricity that emits the sparks with which we are charged to another body;—and when the retorts lose their power—which means, in plain sense, when the flattery of the recipient no longer gratifies us—and yawning, that fearful abyss in love, is visible, the passion is over. Depend on it," continued Byron, "the only love that never changes its object is self-love; and the disappointments it meets with make a more lasting impression than all others."

I told Byron that I expected him to-morrow to disprove every word he had uttered to-day. He laughed, and declared that his profession of faith was contained in the verses, "Could love for ever;" that he wished he could think otherwise, but so it was.

Byron affects scepticism in love and friendship, and yet is, I am persuaded, capable of making great sacrifices for both. He has an unaccountable passion for misrepresenting his own feelings and motives, and exaggerates his defects more than any enemy could do: he is often angry because we do not believe all he says against himself, and would be, I am sure, delighted to meet someone credulous enough to give credence to all he asserts or insinuates with regard to his own misdoings.

If Byron were not a great poet, the charlatanism of affecting to be a Satanic character, in this our matter-of-fact nineteenth century, would be very amusing: but when the genius of the man is taken into account, it appears too ridiculous, and one feels mortified at finding that he, who could elevate the thoughts of his readers to the empyrean, should fall below the ordinary standard of every-day life, by a vain and futile attempt to pass for something that all who know him rejoice that he is not; while, by his sublime genius and real goodness of heart, which are

made visible every day, he establishes claims on the admiration and sympathy of mankind that few can resist. If he knew his own power, he would disdain such unworthy means of attracting attention, and trust to his merit for commanding it.

"I know not when I have been so much interested and amused," said Byron, "as in the perusal of Count D'Orsay's journal: it is one of the choicest productions I ever read, and is astonishing as being written by a minor, as I find he was under age when he penned it. The most piquant vein of pleasantry runs through it; the ridicules—and they are many—of our dear compatriots are touched with the pencil of a master; but what pleases me most is, that neither the reputation of man nor woman is compromised, nor any disclosures made that could give pain. He has admirably penetrated the secret of English *ennui*," continued Byron, "a secret that is one to the English only, as I defy any foreigner, blessed with a common share of intelligence, to come in contact with them without discovering it. The English know that they are *ennuyés*, but vanity prevents their discovering that they are *ennuyeux*, and they will be little disposed to pardon the person who enlightens them on this point.

"Count D'Orsay ought to publish this work,"

continued Byron, "for two reasons: the first, that it will be sure to get known that he has written a piquant journal, and people will imagine it to be a malicious libel, instead of being a playful satire, as the English are prone to fancy the worst, from a consciousness of not meriting much forbearance; the second reason is, that the impartial view of their foibles, taken by a stranger who cannot be actuated by any of the little jealousies that influence the members of their own coteries, might serve to correct them, though I fear *réflexion faite*, there is not much hope of this. It is an extraordinary anomaly," said Byron, "that people who are really naturally inclined to good, as I believe the English are, and who have the advantages of a better education than foreigners receive, should practise more ill-nature and display more heartlessness than the inhabitants of any other country. This is all the effect of the artificial state of society in England, and the exclusive system has increased the evils of it tenfold. We accuse the French of frivolity," continued Byron, "because they are governed by *fashion;* but this extends only to their dress, whereas the English allow it to govern their pursuits, habits, and modes of thinking and acting: in short, it is the Alpha and Omega of all they think, do, or will: their society, residences, nay, their very friends, are chosen by this

criterion, and old and tried friends, wanting its stamp, are voted *de trop*. Fashion admits women of more than dubious reputations, and well-born men with none, into circles where virtue and honour, not *à la mode*, might find it difficult to get placed; and if (on hearing the reputation of Lady This, or Mrs. That, or rather want of reputation, canvassed over by their associates) you ask why they are received, you will be told it is because they are seen everywhere—they are the fashion.

"I have known," continued Byron, "men and women in London received in the first circles, who, by their birth, talents, or manners, had no one claim to such a distinction, merely because they had been seen in one or two houses, to which, by some manœuvring, they got the *entrée;* but I must add, they were not remarkable for good looks, or superiority in any way, for if they had been, it would have elicited attention to their want of other claims, and closed the doors of fashion against them. I recollect," said Byron, "on my first entering fashionable life, being surprised at the (to me) unaccountable distinctions I saw made between ladies placed in peculiar and precisely similar situations. I have asked some of the fair leaders of fashion, 'Why do you exclude Lady ——, and admit Lady ——, as they are both in the

same scrape?' With that amiable indifference to cause and effect that distinguishes the generality of your sex, the answer has invariably been, 'Oh! we admit Lady —— because all our set receive her; and exclude Lady —— because they will not.' I have pertinaciously demanded, 'Well, but you allow their claims are equal?' and the reply has been, 'Certainly; and we believe the excluded lady to be the better of the two.' *Mais que voulez-vous?* she is not received, and the other is; it is all chance or luck: and this," continued Byron, "is the state of society in London, and such the line of demarcation drawn between the pure and the impure, when chance or luck, as Lady —— honestly owned to me, decided whether a woman lost her caste or not.

"I am not much of a prude," said Byron, "but I declare that, for the general good, I think that all women who had forfeited their reputations ought to lose their places in society; but this rule ought never to admit of an exception: it becomes an injustice and hardship when it does, and loses all effect as a warning or preventive. I have known young married women, when cautioned by friends on the probability of losing caste by such or such a step, quote the examples of Lady This, or Mrs. That, who had been more imprudent, (for imprudence

is the new name for guilt in England,) and yet one saw these ladies received everywhere, and vain were precepts with such examples.

"People may suppose," continued Byron, "that I respect not morals, because unfortunately I have sometimes violated them: perhaps from this very circumstance I respect them the more, as we never value riches until our prodigality has made us feel their loss; and a lesson of prudence coming from him who had squandered thousands, would have more weight than whole pages written by one who had not personal experience: so I maintain that persons who have *erred* are most competent to point out errors. It is my respect for morality that makes me so indignant against its vile substitute cant, with which I wage war, and this the good-natured world chooses to consider as a sign of my wickedness.

"We are all the creatures of circumstance," continued Byron; "the greater part of our errors are caused, if not excused, by events and situations over which we have had little control;* the world sees the faults, but sees not what led to them: therefore I am always lenient to crimes that have brought their own punishment, while

* "Men are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men."
Don Juan, Canto V., stanza xvii.

I am little disposed to pity those who think they atone for their own sins by exposing those of others, and add cant and hypocrisy to the catalogue of their vices. Let not a woman who has gone astray, *without detection*, affect to disdain a less fortunate, though not more culpable, female. She who is unblemished should pity her who has fallen, and she whose conscience tells her she is not spotless should show forbearance; but it enrages me to see women whose conduct is, or has been, infinitely more blamable than that of the persons they denounce, affecting a prudery towards others that they had not in the hour of need for themselves. It was this forbearance towards her own sex that charmed me in Lady Melbourne: she had always some kind interpretation for every action that would admit of one, and pity or silence when aught else was impracticable.

"Lady ——, beautiful and spotless herself, always struck me as wanting that pity she could so well afford. Not that I ever thought her ill-natured or spiteful; but I thought there was a certain severity in her demarcations, which her acknowledged purity rendered less necessary. Do you remember my lines in the 'Giaour,' ending with—

> "'No: gayer insects fluttering by
> Ne'er droop the wing o'er those that die;

And lovelier things have mercy shown
To every failing but their own;
And every woe a tear can claim
Except an erring sister's shame.'

"These lines were suggested by the conduct I witnessed in London from women to their erring acquaintances—a conduct that led me to draw the conclusion, that their hearts are formed of less penetrable stuff than those of men."

CHAPTER XII.

Retrograde Greece—The less of two evils—The system of *Serventism*—The advantages of morals and religion—Education's effects—The consolation of avarice—Byron's expedition to Greece—Sir Walter Scott and his sincerity—*Tête-à-tête* suppers—The organ of locomotiveness—Securing a *tête-à-tête*—Food for a week—An equivocal compliment—Byron's love of mischief—His plagiarism—A triumphant refutation.

Byron has not lived sufficiently long in England, and has left it at too young an age, to be able to form an impartial and just estimate of his compatriots. He was a busy actor, more than a spectator, in the circles which have given him an unfavourable impression; and his own passions were, at that period, too much excited to permit his reason to be unbiased in the opinions he formed. In his hatred of what he calls cant and hypocrisy, he is apt to denounce as such all that has the air of severity; and which, though often painful in individual cases, is, on the whole, salutary for the general good of society.

This error of Byron's proceeds from a want of actual personal observation, for which opportunity

has not been afforded him, as the brief period of his residence in England, after he had arrived at an age to judge, and the active part he took in the scenes around him, allowed him not to acquire that perfect knowledge of society, manners, and customs, which is necessary to correct the prejudices that a superficial acquaintance with it is so apt to engender, even in the most acute observer, but to which a powerful imagination, prompt to jump at conclusions, without pausing to trace cause and effect, is still more likely to fall into. Byron sees not that much of what he calls the usages of cant and hypocrisy are the fences that protect propriety, and that they cannot be invaded without exposing what it is the interest of all to preserve. Had he been a calm looker on, instead of an impassioned actor in the drama of English fashionable life, he would probably have taken a less harsh view of all that has so much excited his ire, and felt the necessity of many of the restraints which fettered him.

A two years' residence in Greece, with all the freedom and personal independence that a desultory rambling life admits of and gives a taste for, —in a country where civilization has so far retrograded that its wholesome laws, as well as its refinement, have disappeared, leaving license to usurp the place of liberty,—was little calculated

to prepare a young man of three-and-twenty for the conventional habits and restraints of that artificial state of society which extreme civilization and refinement beget. No wonder then that it soon became irksome to him, and that, like the unbroken courser of Arabia, when taken from the deserts where he had sported in freedom, he spurned the puny meshes which ensnared him, and pined beneath the trammels that impeded his liberty.

Byron returned to England in his twenty-third year, and left it before he had completed his twenty-eighth, soured by disappointments and rendered reckless by a sense of injuries. "He who fears not is to be feared," says the proverb; and Byron, wincing under all the obloquy which malice and envy could inflict, felt that its utmost malignity could go no farther, and became fixed in a fearless braving of public opinion, which a false spirit of vengeance led him to indulge in, turning the genius, that could have achieved the noblest ends, into the means of accomplishing those which were unworthy of it. His attacks on the world are like the war of the Titans against the gods,—the weapons he aims fall back on himself. He feels that he has allowed sentiments of pique to influence and deteriorate his works; and that the sublime passages in them, which now appear like gleams of sunshine flitting

across the clouds that sometimes obscure the bright luminary, might have been one unbroken blaze of light, had not worldly resentment and feelings dimmed their lustre.

This consciousness of misapplied genius has made itself felt in Byron, and will yet lead him to redeem the injustice he has done it; and when he has won the guerdon of the world's applause, and satisfied that craving for celebrity which consumes him, reconciled to that world, and at peace with himself, he may yet win as much esteem for the man as he has hitherto elicited admiration for the poet. To satisfy Byron, the admiration must be unqualified; and, as I have told him, this depends on himself: he has only to choose a subject for his muse, in which not only received opinions are not wounded, but morality is inculcated; and his glowing genius, no longer tarnished by the stains that have previously blemished it, will shine forth with a splendour, and insure that universal applause, which will content even his ambitious and aspiring nature. He wants someone to tell him what he *might* do, what he *ought* to do, and what so doing he would become. I have told him: but I have not sufficient weight or influence with him to make my representations effective; and the task would be delicate and difficult for a male friend to undertake, as Byron is pertinacious in refusing to admit that his works

have failed in morality, though in his heart I am sure he feels it.

Talking of someone who was said to have fallen in love, "I suspect," said Byron, "that he must be indebted to your country for this phrase, 'falling in love;' it is expressive and droll: they also say falling ill; and, as both are involuntary, and, in general, equally calamitous, the expressions please me. Of the two evils, the falling ill seems to me to be the least; at all events I would prefer it; for as, according to philosophers, pleasure consists in the absence of pain, the sensations of returning health (if one does recover) must be agreeable; but the recovery from love is another affair, and resembles the awaking from an agreeable dream. Hearts are often only lent, when they are supposed to be given away," continued Byron; "and are the loans for which people exact the most usurious interest. When the debt is called in, the borrower, like all other debtors, feels little obligation to the lender, and, having refunded the principal, regrets the interest he has paid. You see," said Byron, "that, *à l'Anglaise*, I have taken a mercantile view of the tender passion; but I must add that, in closing the accounts, they are seldom fairly balanced, 'e ciò sa 'l suo dottore.' There is this difference between the Italians and others," said Byron, "that the end of love is not with them

the beginning of hatred, which certainly is, in general, the case with the English, and, I believe, the French: this may be accounted for from their having less vanity; which is also the reason why they have less ill-nature in their compositions; for vanity, being always on the *qui vive*, up in arms, ready to resent the least offence offered to it, precludes good temper."

I asked Byron if his partiality for the Italians did not induce him to overlook other and obvious reasons for their not beginning to hate when they ceased to love: first, the attachments were of such long duration that age arrived to quell angry feelings, and the gradations were so slow, from the first sigh of love to the yawn of expiring affection, as to be almost imperceptible to the parties; and the system of domesticating in Italy established a habit that rendered them necessary to each other. Then the slavery of *serventism*, the jealousies, carried to an extent that is unknown in England, and which exists longer than the passion that is supposed to excite, if not excuse, them, may tend to reconcile lovers to the exchange of friendship for love; and, rejoicing in their recovered liberty, they are more disposed to indulge feelings of complacency than hatred.

Byron said, "Whatever may be the cause, they have reason to rejoice in the effect; and

one is never afraid in Italy of inviting people together who have been known to have once had warmer feelings than friendship towards each other, as is the case in England, where, if persons under such circumstances were to meet, angry glances and a careful avoidance of civility would mark their kind sentiments towards each other."

I asked Byron if what he attributed to the effects of wounded vanity might not proceed from other and better feelings, at least on the part of women. Might not shame and remorse be the cause? The presence of the man who had caused their dereliction from duty and virtue calling up both, could not be otherwise than painful and humiliating to women who were not totally destitute of delicacy and feeling; and that this most probably was the cause of the coldness he observed between persons of opposite sexes in society.

"You are always thinking of and reasoning on the *English*," answered Byron: "mind, I refer to Italians, and with them there can be neither shame nor remorse, because, in yielding to love, they do not believe they are violating either their duty or religion; consequently a man has none of the reproaches to dread that await him in England when a lady's conscience is *awakened*,—which, by the by, I have observed

it seldom is until *affection* is laid asleep, which," continued Byron, "is very convenient to herself, but very much the reverse to the unhappy man."

I am sure that much of what Byron said in this conversation was urged to vex me. Knowing my partiality to England and all that is English, he has a childish delight in exciting me into an argument; and as I as yet know nothing of Italy, except through books, he takes advantage of his long residence in, and knowledge of the country, to vaunt the superiority of its customs and usages, which I never can believe he prefers to his own. A wish of vexing or astonishing the English is, I am persuaded, the motive that induces him to attack Shakespeare; and he is highly gratified when he succeeds in doing either, and enjoys it like a child. He says that the reason why he judges the English women so severely is, that, being brought up with certain principles, they are doubly to blame in not making their conduct accord with them; and that, while punishing with severity the transgressions of persons of their own sex in humble positions, they look over the more glaring misconduct and vices of the rich and great—that not the crime, but its detection, is punished in England, and, to avoid this, hypocrisy is added to want of virtue.

"You have heard, of course," said Byron, "that I was considered mad in England; my

most intimate friends in general, and Lady Byron in particular, were of this opinion; but it did not operate in my favour in their minds, as they were not, like the natives of Eastern nations, disposed to pay honour to my supposed insanity or folly. They considered me a *mejnoun*,* but would not treat me as one. And yet, had such been the case, what ought to excite such pity and forbearance as a mortal malady that reduces us to more than childishness—a prostration of intellect that makes us dependent on even menial hands? Reason," continued Byron, "is so unreasonable, that few can say that they are in possession of it. I have often doubted my own sanity; and, what is more, wished for insanity—anything—to quell memory, the never-dying worm that feeds on the heart, and only calls up the *past* to make the *present* more insupportable. Memory has for me

> "'The vulture's ravenous tooth,
> The raven's funereal song.'

There is one thing," continued Byron, "that increases my discontent, and adds to the rage that I often feel against self. It is the conviction that the events in life that have most pained me —that have turned the milk of my nature into

* An Arabic word, sometimes used by Turkish-speaking people, which means a lunatic.

gall—have not depended on the persons who tortured me,—as I admit the causes were inadequate to the effects:—it was my own nature, prompt to receive painful impressions, and to retain them with a painful tenacity, that supplied the arms against my peace. Nay, more, I believe that the wounds inflicted were not, for the most part, premeditated; or, if so, that the extent and profundity of them were not anticipated by the persons who aimed them. There are some natures that have a predisposition to grief, as others have to disease; and such was my case. The causes that have made me wretched would probably not have discomposed, or, at least, more than discomposed, another.

"We are all differently organized; and that I feel *acutely* is no more my fault (though it is my misfortune) than that another feels not, is his. We did not make ourselves; and if the elements of unhappiness abound more in the nature of one man than another, he is but the more entitled to our pity and forbearance. Mine is a nature," continued Byron, "that might have been softened and ameliorated by prosperity, but that has been hardened and soured by adversity." Prosperity and adversity are the fires by which moral chemists try and judge human nature; and how few can pass the ordeal! Prosperity corrupts, and adversity renders ordinary nature callous; but

when any portion of excellence exists, neither can injure. The first will expand the heart, and show forth every virtue, as the genial rays of the sun bring forth the fruit and flowers of the earth; and the second will teach sympathy for others, which is best learned in the school of affliction.

"I am persuaded (said Byron) that education has more effect in quelling the passions than people are aware of. I do not think this is achieved by the powers of reasoning and reflection that education is supposed to bestow; for I know by experience how little either can influence the person who is under the tyrant rule of passion. My opinion is, that education, by expanding the mind, and giving sources of tasteful occupation, so fills up the time, that leisure is not left for the passions to gain that empire that they are sure to acquire over the idle and ignorant. Look at the lower orders, and see what fearful proofs they continually furnish of the unlimited power passion has over them. I have seen instances, and particularly in Italy, among the lower class, and of your sex, where the women seemed for the moment transformed into Medeas; and so ungoverned and ungovernable was their rage, that each appeared grand and tragic for the time, and furnished me, who am rather an amateur in studying nature under all her aspects, with

food for reflection. Then the upper classes, too, in Italy, where the march of intellect has not advanced by rail-roads and steam-boats, as in polished, happy England; and where the women remain children in mind long after maturity had stamped their persons!—see one of their stately dames under the influence of the green-eyed monster, and one can believe that the Furies were not fabulous.

"This is amusing at first, but becomes, like most amusements, rather a bore at the end; and a poor *cavaliere servente* must have more courage than falls to the share of most, who would not shut his eyes against the beauty of all *damas* but his own, rather than encounter an explosion of jealousy. But the devil of it is, there is hardly a possibility of avoiding it, as the Italian women are so addicted to jealousy, that the poor *serventi* are often accused of the worst intentions for merely performing the simple courtesies of life; so that the system of *serventism* imposes a thousand times more restraint and slavery than marriage ever imposed, even in the most moral countries: indeed, where the morals are the most respected and cultivated, (continued Byron,) there will be the least jealousy or suspicion, as morals are to the enlightened what religion is to the ignorant —their safeguard from committing wrong, or suspecting it. So you see, bad as I am supposed

to be, I have, by this admission, proved the advantages of morals and religion.

"But to return to my opinion of the effect education has in extending the focus of ideas, and, consequently, in curbing the intensity of the passions. I have remarked that well-educated women rarely, if ever, gave way to any ebullitions of them; and this is a grand step gained in conquering their empire, as habit in this, as well as in all else, has great power. I hope my daughter will be well educated; but of this I have little dread, as her mother is highly cultivated, and certainly has a degree of self-control that I never saw equalled. I am certain that Lady Byron's first idea is, what is due to herself; I mean that it is the undeviating rule of her conduct. I wish she had thought a little more of what is due to others. Now my besetting sin is a want of that self-respect,—which she has in *excess;* and that want has produced much unhappiness to us both. But though I accuse Lady Byron of an excess of self-respect, I must in candour admit, that if any person ever had an excuse for an extraordinary portion of it, she has; as in all her thoughts, words, and deeds, she is the most decorous woman that ever existed, and must appear—what few, I fancy, could—a perfect and refined gentlewoman, even to her *femme-de-chambre.*

"This extraordinary degree of self-command in Lady Byron produced an opposite effect on me. When I have broken out, on slight provocations, into one of my ungovernable fits of rage, her calmness piqued and seemed to reproach me; it gave her an air of superiority that vexed, and increased my *mauvaise humeur*. I am now older and wiser, and should know how to appreciate her conduct as it deserved, as I look on self-command as a positive virtue, though it is one I have not courage to adopt."

Talking of his proposed expedition to Greece, Byron said that, as the moment approached for undertaking it, he almost wished he had never thought of it. "This (said Byron) is one of the many scrapes into which my poetical temperament has drawn me. You smile; but it is nevertheless true. No man, or woman either, with such a temperament, can be quiet. Passion is the element in which we live; and without it we but vegetate.

"All the passions have governed me in turn, and I have found them the veriest tyrants;—like all slaves, I have reviled my masters, but submitted to the yoke they imposed. I had hoped (continued Byron) that avarice, that old gentlemanly vice, would, like Aaron's serpent, have swallowed up all the rest in me; and that now I am descending into the vale of years, I might

have found pleasure in golden realities, as in youth I found it in golden dreams, (and let me tell you, that, of all the passions, this same decried *avarice* is the most consolatory, and, in nine cases out of ten, lasts the longest, and is the latest,) when up springs a new passion,—call it love of liberty, military ardour, or what you will,—to disgust me with my strong box, and the comfortable contemplation of my *moneys*,—nay, to create wings for my golden darlings, that may waft them away from me for ever; and I may awaken to find that this, my present ruling passion, as I have always found my last, was the most worthless of all, with the soothing reflection that it has left me *minus* some thousands. But I am fairly in for it, and it is useless to repine; but, I repeat, this scrape, which may be my last, has been caused by my poetical temperament,—the devil take it, say I."

Byron was irresistibly comic when commenting on his own errors or weaknesses. His face, half laughing and half serious, archness always predominating in its expression, added peculiar force to his words.

"Is it not pleasant (continued Byron) that my eyes should never open to the folly of any of the undertakings passion prompts me to engage in, until I am so far embarked that retreat (at least with honour) is impossible, and my *mal à propos*

sagesse arrives, to scare away the enthusiasm that led to the undertaking, and which is so requisite to carry it on? It is all an up-hill affair with me afterwards: I cannot, for my life, *échauffer* my imagination again; and my position excites such ludicrous images and thoughts in my own mind, that the whole subject, which, seen through the veil of passion, looked fit for a sublime epic, and I one of its heroes, examined now through reason's glass, appears fit only for a travesty, and my poor self a Major Sturgeon, marching and counter-marching, not from Acton to Ealing, or from Ealing to Acton, but from Corinth to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth. Yet, hang it, (continued he,) these very names ought to chase away every idea of the ludicrous; but the laughing devils will return, and make a mockery of everything, as with me there is, as Napoleon said, but one step between the sublime and the ridiculous.

"Well, *if I do* (and this *if* is a grand *peut-être* in my future history) outlive the campaign, I shall write two poems on the subject—one an epic, and the other a burlesque, in which none shall be spared, and myself least of all: indeed, you must allow (continued Byron) that if I take liberties with my friends, I take still greater ones with myself; therefore they ought to bear with me, if only out of consideration for my impar-

tiality. I am also determined to write a poem in praise of avarice, (said Byron,) as I think it a most ill-used and unjustly decried passion :— mind, I do not call it a vice,—and I hope to make it clear that a passion which enables us to conquer the appetites, or, at least, the indulgence of them; that triumphs over pride, vanity, and ostentation; that leads us to the practice of daily self-denial, temperance, sobriety, and a thousand other praiseworthy practices, ought not to be censured, more especially as all the sacrifices it commands are endured without any weak feeling of reference to others, though to others all the reward of such sacrifices belongs."

Byron laughed very much at the thought of this poem, and the censures it would excite in England among the matter-of-fact, credulous class of readers and writers. Poor Byron! how much more pains did he bestow to take off the gloss from his own qualities, than others do to give theirs a false lustre! In his hatred and contempt of hypocrisy and cant, he outraged his own nature, and rendered more injustice to himself than even his enemies ever received at his hands. His confessions of errors were to be received with caution; for he exaggerated not only his misdeeds but his opinions; and, fond of tracing springs of thought to their sources, he involved himself in doubts, to escape from which

he boldly attributed to himself motives and feelings that had passed, but like shadows, through his mind, and left unrecorded, mementos that might have redeemed even more than the faults of which he accused himself. When the freedom with which Byron remarked on the errors of his friends draws down condemnation from his readers, let them reflect on the still greater severity with which he treated his own, and let this mistaken and exaggerated candour plead his excuse.

"It is odd (said Byron) that I never could get on well in conversation with literary men: they always seemed to think themselves obliged to pay some neat and appropriate compliment to my last work, which I, as in duty bound, was compelled to respond to, and bepraise theirs. They never appeared quite satisfied with my faint praise, and I was far from being satisfied at having been forced to administer it; so mutual constraint ensued, each wondering what was to come next, and wishing each other (at least I can answer for myself) at the devil. Now Scott, though a giant in literature, is unlike literary men; he neither expects compliments nor pays them in conversation. There is a sincerity and simplicity in his character and manner that stamp any commendation of his as truth, and any praise one might offer him must fall short of his deserts; so that

there is no *gêne* in his society. There is nothing in him that gives the impression I have so often had of others, who seemed to say, 'I praise you that you may do the same by me.'

"Moore is a delightful companion, (continued Byron;) gay without being boisterous, witty without effort, comic without coarseness, and sentimental without being lachrymose. He reminds one (continued Byron) of the fairy, who, whenever she spoke, let diamonds fall from her lips. My *tête-à-tête* suppers with Moore are among the most agreeable impressions I retain of the hours passed in London: they are the redeeming lights in the gloomy picture; but they were,

"'Like angel-visits, few and far between;'

for the great defect in my friend Tom is a sort of fidgety unsettledness, that prevents his giving himself up, *con amore*, to any one friend, because he is apt to think he might be more happy with another: he has the organ of locomotiveness largely developed, as a phrenologist would say, and would like to be at three places instead of one.

"I always felt, with Moore, the desire Johnson expressed, to be shut up in a post-chaise, *tête-à-tête* with a pleasant companion, to be quite sure of him. He must be delightful in

a country-house, at a safe distance from any other inviting one, when one could have him really to one's self, and enjoy his conversation and his singing, without the perpetual fear that he is expected at Lady This or Lady That's, or the being reminded that he promised to look in at Lansdowne House or Grosvenor Square. The wonder is, *not* that he is *recherché*, but that he wastes himself on those who can so little appreciate him, though they value the *éclat* his reputation gives to their stupid *soirées*. I have known a dull man live on a *bon mot* of Moore's for a week; and I once offered a wager of a considerable sum that the reciter was *guiltless* of understanding its point, but could get no one to accept my bet.

"Are you acquainted with the family of ——?" (asked Byron). The commendation formerly bestowed on the Sydney family might be reversed for them, as all the sons are virtuous, and all the daughters brave. I once (continued he) said this, with a grave face, to a near relation of theirs, who received it as a compliment, and told me I was very good. I was in old times fond of mystifying, and paying equivocal compliments; but 'was is not is' with me, as God knows, in any sense, for I am now cured of mystifying, as well as of many others of my mischievous pranks: whether I am a *better* man for my self-correction remains to be

proved; I am quite sure that I am not a more agreeable one. I have always had a strong love of mischief in my nature, (said Byron,) and this still continues, though I do not very often give way to its dictates. It is this lurking devil that prompts me to abuse people against whom I have not the least malicious feeling, and to praise some whose merits (if they have any) I am little acquainted with; but I do it in the mischievous spirit of the moment to vex the person or persons with whom I am conversing. Is not this very childish? (continued Byron;) and, above all, for a poet, which people tell me I am? All I know is, that, if I am, poets can be greater fools than other people.

"We of the craft—poets, I mean—resemble paper-kites; we soar high into the air, but are held to earth by a cord, and our flight is restrained by a child—that child is self. We are but grown children, having all their weakness, and only wanting their innocence; our thoughts soar, but the frailty of our natures brings them back to earth. What should we be without thoughts? (continued Byron;) they are the bridges by which we pass over time and space. And yet, perhaps, like troops flying before the enemy, we are often tempted to destroy the bridges we have passed, to save ourselves from pursuit. How often have I tried to shun thought! But come, I must not

get gloomy; my thoughts are almost always of the sombre hue, so that I ought not to be blamed (said he, laughing) if I steal those of others, as I am accused of doing; I cannot have any more disagreeable ones than my own, at least as far as they concern myself.

"In all the charges of plagiary brought against me in England, (said Byron,) did you hear me accused of stealing from Madame de Staël the opening lines of my 'Bride of Abydos'? She is supposed to have borrowed her lines from Schlegel, or to have stolen them from Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister;' so you see I am a third or fourth hand stealer of stolen goods. Do you know De Staël's lines? (continued Byron;) for if I am a thief, she must be the plundered, as I don't read German, and do French; yet I could almost swear that I never saw her verses when I wrote mine, nor do I even now remember them. I think the first began with 'Cette terre,' etc., etc., but the rest I forget; as you have a good memory, perhaps you would repeat them."

I did so, and they are as follows:—

"Cette terre, où les myrtes fleurissent,
Où les rayons des cieux tombent avec amour,
Où les sons enchanteurs dans les airs retentissent,
Où la plus douce nuit succède au plus beau jour."

"Well (said Byron) I do not see any point of resemblance, except in the use of the two un-

fortunate words 'land' and 'myrtle,' and for using these new and original words I am a plagiarist! To avoid such charges, I must invent a dictionary for myself. Does not this charge prove the liberal spirit of the hypercritics in England? If they knew how little I value their observations, or the opinions of those that they can influence, they would be perhaps more spiteful, and certainly more careful in producing better proofs of their charges; the one of De Staël I consider a triumphant refutation for me."

CHAPTER XIII.

The liberty of thought and speech—The king of prosers—Bores—The Irishwoman's fortune—*Un chantre du enfer*—A fanciful simile—M. de Lamartine—His ode to Byron—His "Meditations"—The one disadvantage of solitude—The rock which wrecked Napoleon—Byron compares himself to a tiger—Diderot—How to write of women—Byron's mother and sister: their influence on him—Thomas Campbell—"The Pleasures of Hope"—To know "by heart"—"The Pleasures of Memory"—Loving-cups for the poets—An excuse for Shakespeare—Pope—Byron's elocution.

"I OFTEN think (said Byron) that were I to return to England, I should be considered, in certain circles, as having a *très mauvais ton*, for I have been so long out of it that I have learned to say what I think, instead of saying only what, by the rules of convenience, people are permitted to think. For though England tolerates the liberty of the press, it is far from tolerating liberty of thought or of speech; and since the progress of modern refinement, when delicacy of words is as remarkable as indelicacy of actions, a plain-speaking man is sure to get into a scrape. Nothing amuses me more than to see refinement *versus*

morals, and to know that people are shocked *not* at crimes, but their detection. The Spartan boy, who suffered the animal he had secured by theft to prey on his vitals, evinced not more constancy in concealing his sufferings than do the English in suppressing all external symptoms of what they must feel, and on many occasions, when Nature makes herself felt through the expression of her feelings, would be considered almost as a crime. But I believe crime is a word banished from the vocabulary of *haut-ton*, as the vices of the rich and great are called errors, and those of the poor and lowly only, crimes.

"Do you know ——? (asked Byron). He is the king of prosers. I called him 'he of the thousand tales,' in humble imitation of Boccaccio, whom I styled 'he of the hundred tales of love:' —*mais, hélas!* ——'s are not tales of love, or that beget love; they are born of dulness, and inciting sleep, they produce the same effect on the senses that the monotonous sound of a waterfall never fails to have on mine. With —— one is afraid to speak, because whatever is said is sure to bring forth a reminiscence, that as surely leads to interminable recollections,

"'Dull as the dreams of him who swills vile beer.'

Thus (continued Byron), —— is so honourable and well-intentioned a man that one can find

nothing bad to say of him, except that he is a bore ; and as there is no law against that class of offenders, one must bear with him.

"It is to be hoped, that, with all the modern improvements in refinement, a mode will be discovered of getting rid of bores, for it is too bad that a poor wretch can be punished for stealing your pocket-handkerchief or gloves, and that no punishment can be inflicted on those who steal your time, and with it your temper and patience, as well as the bright thoughts that might have entered into the mind, (like the Irishman who lost a fortune before he had got it,) but were frighted away by the bore. Nature certainly (said Byron) has not dealt charitably by ——, for, independent of his being the king of prosers, he is the ugliest person possible, and when he talks, breathes not of Araby the blest: his heart is good, but the stomach is none of the best. His united merits led me to attempt an epigram on them, which, I believe, is as follows :—

> "'When conversing with ——, who can disclose
> Which suffers the most—eyes, ears, or the nose?'

"I repeated this epigram (continued Byron) to him as having been made on a mutual friend of ours, and he enjoyed it, as we all do some hit on a friend.

"I have known people who were incapable of

saying the least unkind word against friends, and yet who listened with evident (though attempted to be suppressed) pleasure to the malicious jokes or witty sarcasms of others against them; a proof that, even in the best people, some taints of the original evil of our natures remain. You think I am wrong (continued Byron) in my estimate of human nature; you think I analyze my own evil qualities and those of others too closely, and judge them too severely. I have need of self-examination to reconcile me to all the incongruities I discover, and to make me more lenient to faults that my tongue censures, but that my heart pardons, from the consciousness of its own weakness."

We should all do well to reflect on the frailty of man, if it led us more readily to forgive his faults, and cherish his virtues;—the former, alas! are inextirpable, but the latter are the victories gained over that most difficult to be conquered of all assailants—self; to which victory, if we do not decree a triumph, we ought to grant an ovation; but, unhappily, the contemplation of human frailty is too apt to harden the heart, and oftener creates disgust than humility. "When we dwell on vices with mockery and bitterness, instead of pity, we may doubt the efficacy of our contemplation; and this," said I to Byron, "seems to me to be your case; for when I hear

your taunting reflections on the discoveries you make in poor, erring human nature; when you have explored and exposed every secret recess of the heart, you appear to me like a fallen angel, sneering at the sins of men, instead of a fellow man pitying them. This it is that makes me think you analyze too deeply; and I would at present lead you to reflect only on the good that still remains in the world,—for be assured there is much good, as an antidote to the evil that you know of."

Byron laughed, and said, "You certainly do not spare me; but you manage to wrap up your censures in an envelope almost complimentary, and that reconciles me to their bitterness, as children are induced to take physic by its being disguised in some sweet substance. The fallen angel is so much more agreeable than the demon, as others have called me, that I am rather flattered than affronted; I ought, in return, to say something *très aimable* to you, in which angelic at least might be introduced, but I will not, as I never can compliment those that I esteem.—But to return to self;—you know that I have been called not only a demon, but a French poet has addressed me as *chantre d'enfer*, which, I suppose, he thinks very flattering. I dare say his poem will be done into English by some Attic resident, and, instead of a singer of hell,

I shall be styled a hellish singer, and so go down to posterity."

He laughed at his own pun, and said he felt half disposed to write a quizzing answer to the French poet, in which he should mystify him.

"It is no wonder (said Byron) that I am considered a demon, when people have taken it into their heads that I am the hero of all my own tales in verse. They fancy one can only describe what has actually occurred to one's self, and forget the power that persons of any imagination possess of identifying themselves, for the time being, with the creations of their fancy. This is a peculiar distinction conferred on me, for I have heard of no other poet who has been identified with his works.

"I saw the other day (said Byron) in one of the papers a fanciful simile about Moore's writings and mine. It stated that Moore's poems appeared as if they ought to be written with crow-quills, on rose-coloured paper, stamped with Cupids and flowers; and mine on asbestos, written by quills from the wing of an eagle:—you laugh, but I think this a very sublime comparison,—at least, so far as I am concerned,—it quite consoles me for 'chantre d'enfer.' By the bye, the French poet is neither a philosopher nor a logician: as he dubs me by this title merely because I doubt that there is an *enfer*,—ergo, I

cannot be styled the *chantre* of a place of which I doubt the existence. I dislike French verse so much (said Byron) that I have not read more than a few lines of the one in which I am dragged into public view. He calls me, (said Byron,) 'Esprit mystérieux, mortel, ange ou démon ;' which I call very uncivil, for a well-bred Frenchman, and moreover one of the craft: I wish he would let me and my works alone, for I am sure I do not trouble him or his, and should not know that he existed, except from his notice of me, which some good-natured friend has sent me. There are some things in the world, of which, like gnats, we are only reminded of the existence by their stinging us; this was his position with me."

Had Byron read the whole of the poem addressed to him by M. de Lamartine, he would have been more flattered than offended by it, as it is not only full of beauty, but the admiration for the genius of the English poet, which pervades every sentiment of the ode, is so profound, that the epithet which offended the morbid sensitiveness of Byron would have been readily pardoned. M. de Lamartine is perhaps the only French poet who could have so justly appreciated, and gracefully eulogized, our wayward child of genius; and having written so successfully himself, his praise is more valuable. His

"Meditations" possess a depth of feeling which, tempered by a strong religious sentiment that makes the Christian rise superior to the philosopher, bears the impress of a true poetical temperament, which could not fail to sympathize with all the *feelings*, however he might differ from the *reasonings*, of Byron. Were the works of the French poet better known to the English bard he could not, with even all his dislike to French poetry, have refused his approbation to the writings of M. de Lamartine.

Talking of solitude—"It has but one disadvantage (said Byron), but that is a serious one, —it is apt to give one too high an opinion of one's self. In the world we are sure to be often reminded of every known or supposed defect we may have; hence we can rarely, unless possessed of an inordinate share of vanity, form a very exalted opinion of ourselves, and, in society, woe be to him who lets it be known that he thinks more highly of himself than of his neighbours, as this is a crime that arms everyone against him. This was the rock on which Napoleon foundered; he had so often wounded the *amour-propre* of others, that they were glad to hurl him from the eminence that made him appear a giant and those around him pigmies.

"If a man or woman has any striking superiority, some great defect or weakness must be

discovered to counterbalance it, that their contemporaries may console themselves for their envy, by saying, 'Well, if I have not the genius of Mr. This, or the beauty or talents of Mrs. That, I have not the violent temper of the one, or the overweening vanity of the other.' But, to return to solitude, (said Byron,) it is the only fool's paradise on earth: there we have no one to remind us of our faults, or by whom we can be humiliated by comparisons. Our evil passions sleep, because they are not excited; our productions appear sublime, because we have no kind and judicious friend to hint at their defects, and to point out faults of style and imagery where we had thought ourselves most luminous: these are the advantages of solitude, and those who have once tasted them, can never return to the busy world again with any zest for its feverish enjoyments. In the world (said Byron) I am always irritable and violent; the very noise of the streets of a populous city affects my nerves: I seemed in a London house 'cabined, cribbed, confined,' and felt like a tiger in too small a cage: apropos of tigers, did you ever observe that all people in a violent rage, walk up and down the place they are in, as wild beasts do in their dens?* I have

* Byron was fond of comparing himself to a tiger. In a letter to Mr. Murray he writes: "I am like the tiger (in poesy), if I miss the first spring, I go growling back to my jungle."—Byron's Works, 1832 edition, vol. v., p. 33.

particularly remarked this, (continued he,) and it proved to me, what I never doubted, that we have much of the animal and the ferocious in our natures, which, I am convinced, is increased by an over-indulgence of our carnivorous propensities.

"It has been said that, to enjoy solitude, a man must be superlatively good or bad: I deny this, because there are no superlatives in man,—all are comparative or relative; but, had I no other reason to deny it, my own experience would furnish me with one. God knows I never flattered myself with the idea of being superlatively good, as no one better knows his faults than I do mine; but, at the same time, I am as unwilling to believe that I am superlatively bad, yet I enjoy solitude more than I ever enjoyed society, even in my most youthful days."

I told Byron, that I expected he would one day give the world a collection of useful aphorisms, drawn from personal experience. He laughed and said—"Perhaps I may; those are best suited to advise others who have missed the road themselves, and this has been my case. I have found friends false,—acquaintances malicious,—relations indifferent,—and nearer and dearer connexions perfidious. Perhaps much, if not all this, has been caused by my own waywardness; but that has not prevented my feeling it keenly.

It has made me look on friends as partakers of prosperity,—censurers in adversity,—and absentees in distress; and has forced me to view acquaintances merely as persons who think themselves justified in courting or cutting one, as best suits them. But relations I regard only as people privileged to tell disagreeable truths, and to accept weighty obligations, as matters of course. You have now (continued Byron) my unsophisticated opinion of friends, acquaintances, and relations; of course there are always exceptions, but they are rare, and exceptions do not make the rule. All that I have said are but reiterated truisms that all admit to be just, but that few, if any, act upon; they are like the death-bell that we hear toll for others, without thinking that it must soon toll for us; we know that others have been deceived, but we believe that we are either too clever, or too *lovable*, to meet the same fate: we see our friends drop daily around us, many of them younger and healthier than ourselves, yet we think that we shall live to be old, as if we possessed some stronger hold on life than those who have gone before us.

"Alas! life is but a dream from which we are only awakened by death. All else is illusion; changing as we change, and each cheating us in turn, until death withdraws the veil, and shows us the dread reality. It is strange (said Byron)

that feeling, as most people do, life a burthen, we should still cling to it with such pertinacity. This is another proof of animal feeling; for if the divine spirit that is supposed to animate us mastered the animal nature, should we not rejoice at laying down the load that has so long oppressed us, and beneath which we have groaned for years, to seek a purer, brighter existence? Who ever reached the age of twenty-five (continued Byron) without feeling the *tædium vitæ* which poisons the little enjoyment that we are allowed to taste? We begin life with the hope of attaining happiness; soon discovering that to be unattainable, we seek pleasure as a poor substitute; but even this eludes our grasp, and we end by desiring repose, which death alone can give."

I told Byron that the greater part of our chagrins arose from disappointed hopes; that, in our pride and weakness, we considered happiness as our birthright, and received infliction as an injustice; whereas the latter was the inevitable lot of man, and the other but the *ignis fatuus* that beguiles the dreary path of life, and sparkles but to deceive. I added that while peace of mind was left us, we could not be called miserable. This greatest of all earthly consolations depends on ourselves; whereas for happiness we rely on others: but, as the first is lasting, and the second fleeting, we ought to cultivate that of which

nought but our own actions can deprive us, and enjoy the other as we do a fine autumnal day, that we prize the more, because we know it will soon be followed by winter.

"Your philosophy is really admirable (said Byron) if it were possible to follow it; but I suspect that you are among the number of those who preach it the most, and practise it the least, for you have too much feeling to have more than a theoretical knowledge of it. For example, how would you bear the ingratitude and estrangement of friends—of those in whom you had garnered up your heart? I suspect that, in such a case, feeling would beat philosophy out of the field; for I have ever found that philosophy, like experience, never comes until one has ceased to require its services.

"I have (continued Byron) experienced ingratitude and estrangement from friends; and this, more than all else, has destroyed my confidence in human nature. It is thus from individual cases that we are so apt to generalize. A few persons on whom we have lavished our friendship, without ever examining if they had the qualities requisite to justify such a preference, are found to be ungrateful and unworthy, and instead of blaming our own want of perception in the persons so unwisely chosen, we cry out against poor human nature: one or two examples of

ingratitude and selfishness prejudice us against the world; but six times the number of examples of goodness and sincerity fail to reconcile us to it,—so much more susceptible are we of evil impressions than of good.

"Have you not observed (said Byron) how much more prone people are to remember injuries than benefits? The most essential services are soon forgotten; but some trifling and often unintentional offence is rarely pardoned, and never effaced from the memory. All this proves that we have a strong and decided predisposition to evil; the tendencies and consequences of which we may conceal, but cannot eradicate. I think ill of the world, (continued Byron,) but I do not, as some cynics assert, believe it to be composed of knaves and fools. No, I consider that it is, for the most part, peopled by those who have not talents sufficient to be the first, and yet have one degree too much to be the second."

Byron's bad opinion of mankind is not, I am convinced, genuine; and it certainly does not operate on his actions, as his first impulses are always good, and his heart is kind and charitable. His good deeds are never the result of reflection, as the heart acts before the head has had time to reason. This cynical habit of decrying human nature is one of the many little affectations to which he often descends; and this impression

has become so fixed in my mind, that I have been vexed with myself for attempting to refute opinions of his which, on reflection, I was convinced were not his real sentiments, but uttered either from a foolish wish of display, or from a spirit of contradiction, which much influences his conversation.

I have heard him assert opinions one day, and maintain the most opposite, with equal warmth, the day after: this arises not so much from insincerity, as from being wholly governed by the feeling of the moment: he has no fixed principle of conduct or of thought, and the want of it leads him into errors and inconsistencies, from which he is only rescued by a natural goodness of heart, that redeems, in some degree, what it cannot prevent. Violence of temper tempts him into expressions that might induce people to believe him vindictive and rancorous; he exaggerates all his feelings when he gives utterance to them; and here the imagination, that has led to his triumph in poetry, operates less happily, by giving a stronger shade to his sentiments and expressions. When he writes or speaks at such moments, the force of his language imposes a belief that the feeling which gives birth to it must be fixed in his mind; but see him in a few hours after, and not only no trace of this angry excitement remains, but, if recurred

to by another, he smiles at his own exaggerated warmth of expression, and proves, in a thousand ways, that the temper only is responsible for his defects, and not the heart.

"I think it is Diderot (said Byron) who says that, to describe woman, one ought to dip one's pen in the rainbow; and, instead of sand, use the dust from the wings of butterflies to dry the paper. This is a *concetto* worthy of a Frenchman; and, though meant as complimentary, is really by no means so to your sex. To describe woman, the pen should be dipped, not in the rainbow, but in the heart of man, ere more than eighteen summers have passed over his head; and, to dry the paper, I would allow only the sighs of adolescence. Women are best understood by men whose feelings have not been hardened by a contact with the world, and who believe in virtue because they are unacquainted with vice. A knowledge of vice will, as far as I can judge by experience, invariably produce disgust, as I believe, with my favourite poet, that—

> "'Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,
> That, to be hated, needs but to be seen.'*

But he who has known it can never truly describe woman as she ought to be described; and, there-

* "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen."
Essay on Man, Epistle II., lines 217, 218.

fore, a perfect knowledge of the world unfits a man for the task. When I attempted to describe Haidée and Zuleika, I endeavoured to forget all that friction with the world had taught me; and if I at all succeeded, it was because I was, and am, penetrated with the conviction that women only know evil from having experienced it through men; whereas men have no criterion to judge of purity or goodness but woman. Some portion of this purity and goodness always adheres to woman, (continued Byron,) even though she may lapse from virtue; she makes a willing sacrifice of herself on the altar of affection, and thinks only of him for whom it is made: while men think of themselves alone, and regard the woman but as an object that administers to their selfish gratification, and who, when she ceases to have this power, is thought of no more, save as an obstruction in their path. You look incredulous, (said Byron;) but I have said what I think, though not all that I think, as I have a much higher opinion of your sex than I have even now expressed."

This would be most gratifying could I be sure that, to-morrow or next day, some sweeping sarcasm against my sex may not escape from the lips that have now praised them, and that my credulity, in believing the praise, may not be quoted as an additional proof of their weakness.

This instability of opinion, or expression of opinion, of Byron, destroys all confidence in him, and precludes the possibility of those, who live much in his society, feeling that sentiment of confiding security in him, without which a real regard cannot subsist. It has always appeared a strange anomaly to me, that Byron, who possesses such acuteness in discerning the foibles and defects of others, should have so little power either in conquering or concealing his own, that they are evident even to a superficial observer; it is also extraordinary that the knowledge of human nature, which enables him to discover at a glance such defects, should not dictate the wisdom of concealing his discoveries, at least from those in whom he has made them; but in this he betrays a total want of tact, and must often send away his associates dissatisfied with themselves, and still more so with him, if they happen to possess discrimination or susceptibility.

"To let a person see that you have discovered his faults, is to make him an enemy for life," says Byron; and yet this he does continually: he says, "that the only truths a friend will tell you, are your faults; and the only thing he will give you, is advice." Byron's affected display of knowledge of the world deprives him of commiseration for being its dupe, while his practical inexperience renders him so perpetually. He is

at war with the actual state of things, yet admits that all that he now complains of has existed for centuries; and that those who have taken up arms against the world have found few applauders, and still fewer followers. His philosophy is more theoretical than practical, and must so continue, as long as passion and feeling have more influence over him than reflection and reason. Byron affects to be unfeeling, while he is a victim to sensibility; and to be reasonable, while he is governed by imagination only; and so meets with no sympathy from either the advocates of sensibility or reason, and consequently condemns both.

"It is fortunate for those (said Byron) whose near connexions are good and estimable; independently of various other advantages that are derived from it, perhaps the greatest of all are the impressions made on our minds in early youth by witnessing goodness, impressions which have such weight in deciding our future opinions. If we witness evil qualities in common acquaintances, the effect is slight, in comparison with that made by discovering them in those united to us by the ties of consanguinity; this last disgusts us with human nature, and renders us doubtful of goodness, a progressive step made in misanthropy, the most fearful disease that can attack the mind.

"My first and earliest impressions were

melancholy,—my poor mother gave them; but to my sister, who, incapable of wrong herself, suspected no wrong in others, I owe the little good of which I can boast; and had I earlier known her, it might have influenced my destiny. Augusta has great strength of mind, which is displayed not only in her own conduct, but to support the weak and infirm of purpose. To me she was, in the hour of need, as a tower of strength. Her affection was my last rallying point, and is now the only bright spot that the horizon of England offers to my view. Augusta knew all my weaknesses, but she had love enough to bear with them. I value not the false sentiment of affection that adheres to one while we believe him faultless; not to love him would then be difficult: but give me the love that, with perception to view the errors, has sufficient force to pardon them,—who can 'love the offender, yet detest the offence;' and this my sister had. She has given me such good advice, and yet, finding me incapable of following it, loved and pitied me but the more, because I was erring. This is true affection, and, above all, true Christian feeling; but how rarely is it to be met with in England! where *amour-propre* prompts people to show their superiority by giving advice; and a *mélange* of selfishness and wounded vanity engages them to resent its not being followed;

which they do by not only leaving off the *advised*, but by injuring him by every means in their power.

"Depend on it (continued Byron), the English are the most perfidious friends and unkind relations that the civilized world can produce; and if you have had the misfortune to lay them under weighty obligations, you may look for all the injuries that they can inflict, as they are anxious to avenge themselves for the humiliations they suffer when they accept favours. They are proud, but have not sufficient pride to refuse services that are necessary to their comfort, and have too much false pride to be grateful. They may pardon a refusal to assist them, but they never can forgive a generosity which, as they are seldom capable of practising or appreciating it, overpowers and humiliates them.

"With this opinion of the English (continued Byron), which has not been lightly formed, you may imagine how truly I must value my sister, who is so totally opposed to them. She is tenacious of accepting obligations, even from the nearest relations; but, having accepted, is incapable of aught approaching to ingratitude. Poor Lady —— had just such a sister as mine, who, faultless herself, could pardon and weep over the errors of one less pure, and almost redeem them by her own excellence. Had Lady ——'s

sister or mine (continued Byron) been less good and irreproachable, they could not have afforded to be so forbearing; but, being unsullied, they could show mercy without fear of drawing attention to their own misdemeanours."

Byron talked to-day of Campbell the poet; said that he was a warm-hearted and honest man; praised his works, and quoted some passages from the "Pleasures of Hope," which he said was a poem full of beauties. "I differ, however, (said Byron,) with my friend Campbell on some points. Do you remember the passage?—

> "'And, mark the wretch, whose wanderings never knew
> The world's regard, that soothes, though half untrue;
> Whose erring heart the lash of sorrow bore,
> But found not pity when it erred no more.'"

This, he said, was so far a true picture, those who once erred being supposed to err always,—a charitable, but false, supposition, that the English are prone to act upon. "But (added Byron) I am not prepared to admit, that a man, under such circumstances as those so poetically described by Campbell, could feel hope; and, judging by my own feelings, I should think that there would be more of envy than of hope in the poor man's mind, when he leaned on the gate, and looked at 'the blossom'd bean-field and the sloping green.' Campbell was, however, right in representing it

otherwise (continued Byron). We have all, God knows, occasion for hope to enable us to support the thousand vexations of this dreary existence; and he who leads us to believe in this universal panacea, in which, *par parenthèse*, I have little faith, renders a service to humanity.

"Campbell's 'Lochiel' and 'Mariners' are admirable spirit-stirring productions (said Byron); his 'Gertrude of Wyoming' is beautiful; and some of the episodes in his 'Pleasures of Hope' pleased me so much, that I know them by heart. By the bye (continued he) we must be indebted to Ireland for this mode of expressing the knowing anything by rote, and it is at once so true and poetical, that I always use it. We certainly remember best those passages, as well as events, that interest us most, or touch the heart, which must have given birth to the phrase—'know by heart.'

"The 'Pleasures of Memory' is a very beautiful poem (said Byron), harmonious, finished, and chaste; it contains not a single meretricious ornament. If Rogers has not fixed himself in the higher fields of Parnassus, he has, at least, cultivated a very pretty flower-garden at its base. Is not this (continued Byron) a poetical image worthy of a *conversazione* at Lydia White's? But, jesting apart, for one ought to be serious in talking of so serious a subject as the pleasures of

memory, which, God knows, never offered any pleasures to me, (mind, I mean memory, and not the poem,) it really always did remind me of a flower-garden, so filled with sweets, so trim, so orderly. You, I am sure, know the powerful poem written in a blank leaf of the 'Pleasures of Memory,' by an unknown author?* He has taken my view of the subject, and I envy him for expressing all that I felt; but did not, could not, express as he has done. This wilderness of *triste* thoughts offered a curious contrast to the

* This poem, which is not to be found in all the editions of the "Pleasures of Memory," is appended:

"Pleasures of Memory! oh supremely blest,
And justly proud beyond a Poet's praise!
If the pure confines of thy tranquil breast
Contain, indeed, the subject of thy lays,
By me how envied, for to me
The herald still of misery!
Memory makes her influence known
By sighs and tears and grief alone;
I greet her as the fiend, to whom belong
The vulture's ravening beak, the raven's funeral song.

"She tells of time misspent, of comfort lost,
Of fair occasions gone for ever by,
Of hopes too fondly nursed, too rudely crost,
Of many a cause to wish yet fear to die;
For what, except th' instinctive fear,
Lest she survive, detains me here,
When 'all the life of life' is fled?
What, but the deep inherent dread
Lest she beyond the grave resume her reign,
And realize the hell that priests and beldames feign?"

hortus siccus of pretty flowers that followed it (said Byron), and marks the difference between inspiration and versification.

"Having compared Rogers's poem to a flower-garden," continued Byron, "to what shall I compare Moore's?—to the Valley of Diamonds, where all is brilliant and attractive, but where one is so dazzled by the sparkling on every side that one knows not where to fix, each gem beautiful in itself, but overpowering to the eye from their quantity. Or, to descend to a more homely comparison, though really," continued Byron, "so brilliant a subject hardly admits of anything homely, Moore's poems (with the exception of the Melodies) resemble the fields in Italy, covered by such myriads of fire-flies shining and glittering around, that if one attempts to seize one, another still more brilliant attracts, and one is bewildered from too much brightness.

"I remember reading somewhere," said Byron, "a *concetto* of designating different living poets by the cups Apollo gives them to drink out of. Wordsworth is made to drink from a wooden bowl, and my melancholy self from a skull, chased with gold. Now, I would add the following cups:—To Moore, I would give a cup formed like the lotus flower, and set in brilliants; to Crabbe, a scooped pumpkin; to Rogers, an antique vase, formed of agate; and to Colman,

a champagne glass, as descriptive of their different styles. I dare say none of them would be satisfied with the appropriation; but who ever is satisfied with anything in the shape of criticism? and least of all, poets."

Talking of Shakespeare, Byron said that he owed one half of his popularity to his low origin, which, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins with the multitude, and the other half to the remoteness of the time at which he wrote from our own days. All his vulgarisms," continued Byron, "are attributed to the circumstances of his birth and breeding depriving him of a good education; hence they are to be excused, and the obscurities with which his works abound are all easily explained away by the simple statement, that he wrote above 200 years ago, and that the terms then in familiar use are now become obsolete. With two such good excuses, as want of education, and having written above 200 years before our time, any writer may pass muster; and when to these is added the being a sturdy hind of low degree, which to three parts of the community in England has a peculiar attraction, one ceases to wonder at his supposed popularity; I say supposed, for who goes to see his plays, and who, except country parsons, or mouthing, stage-struck, theatrical amateurs, read them?"

I told Byron what really was, and is, my

impression, that he was not sincere in his depreciation of our immortal bard; and I added, that I preferred believing him insincere, than incapable of judging works, which his own writings proved he must, more than most other men, feel the beauties of. He laughed, and replied, "That the compliment I paid to his writings was so entirely at the expense of his sincerity, that he had no cause to be flattered; but that, knowing I was one of those who worshipped Shakespeare, he forgave me, and would only bargain that I made equal allowance for his worship of Pope." I observed, "That any comparison between the two was as absurd as comparing some magnificent feudal castle, surrounded by mountains and forests, with foaming cataracts, and boundless lakes, to the pretty villa of Pope, with its sheen lawn, artificial grotto, stunted trees, and trim exotics." He said that my simile was more ingenious than just, and hoped that I was prepared to admit that Pope was the greatest of all modern poets, and a philosopher as well as a poet. I made my peace by expressing my sincere admiration of Pope, but begged to be understood as refusing to admit any comparison between him and Shakespeare; and so the subject ended.

Byron is so prone to talk for effect, and to assert what he does not believe, that one must be cautious in giving implicit credence to his

opinions. My conviction is, that, in spite of his declarations to the contrary, he admires Shakespeare as much as most of his countrymen do; but that, unlike the generality of them, he sees the blemishes that the freedom of the times in which the great poet lived led him to indulge in in his writings, in a stronger point of view, and takes pleasure in commenting on them with severity, as a means of wounding the vanity of the English. I have rarely met with a person more conversant with the works of Shakespeare than was Byron. I have heard him quote passages from them repeatedly; and in a tone that marked how well he appreciated their beauty, which certainly lost nothing in his delivery of them, as few possessed a more harmonious voice or a more elegant pronunciation than did Byron. Could there be a less equivocal proof of his admiration of our immortal bard than the tenacity with which his memory retained the finest passages of all his works? When I made this observation to him he smiled, and affected to boast that his memory was so retentive that it equally retained all that he read; but as I had seen many proofs of the contrary, I persevered in affirming what I have never ceased to believe, that, in despite of his professions to the reverse, Byron was in his heart a warm admirer of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Duke of Wellington—"Les Essais de Montaigne"—An amusing idea—Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy"—A severe criticism—An excuse for the plagiarist—How to be original—Dr. Richardson's "Travels along the Mediterranean" Two opinions—Medical men—In a cider cellar—Tom Cribb, the champion pugilist—Madame de Staël—Sir James and Lady Mackintosh—"*Comme vous resemblez un perroquet*"—Religious women—The cant of false religion—Ada Lady Lovelace—Her father's portrait—Byron's presentiment of death in Greece—John Fitzgibbon, second Earl of Clare, a schoolfellow of Byron, and the Lycus in "Childish Recollections"—Byron's three friends—His wish to visit England before going to Greece—His mental reservation in intimate intercourse—What might have been—A literary epoch.

Byron takes a peculiar pleasure in opposing himself to popular opinion on all points; he wishes to be thought as dissenting from the multitude, and this affectation is the secret source of many of the incongruities he expresses. One cannot help lamenting that so great a genius should be sullied by this weakness; but he has so many redeeming points that we must pardon what we cannot overlook, and attribute this error to the imperfectibility of human nature. Once

thoroughly acquainted with his peculiarities, much that appeared incomprehensible is explained, and one knows when to refuse belief to assertions that are not always worthy of commanding it, because uttered from the caprice of the moment.

He declares that such is his bad opinion of the taste and feelings of the English, that he should be prejudiced against any work that they admired, or any person whom they praised; and that their admiration of his own works has rather confirmed than softened his judgment of them. "It was the exaggerated praises of the people in England," said he, "that indisposed me to the Duke of Wellington. I know that the same herd, who were trying to make an idol of him, would, on any reverse, or change of opinions, hurl him from the pedestal to which they had raised him, and lay their idol in the dust.* I remember," continued Byron, "enraging some of his Grace's worshippers, after the battle of Waterloo, by quoting the lines from Ariosto:—

"'Fù il vincer sempre mai lodabil cosa,
Vincasi ò per fortuna ò per ingegnio,'

in answer to their appeal to me, if he was not the greatest general that ever existed."

* This was curiously fulfilled when Apsley House was attacked, and the windows broken, in consequence of which they were afterwards protected by iron shutters.

I told Byron that his quotation was insidious, but that the Duke had gained too many victories to admit the possibility of any of them being achieved more by chance than ability ; and that, like his attacks on Shakespeare, he was not sincere in disparaging Wellington, as I was sure he must *au fond* be as proud of him as all other Englishmen are. "What!" said Byron, "could a Whig be proud of Wellington! would this be consistent?"

The whole of Byron's manner, and his countenance on this and other occasions, when the name of the Duke of Wellington has been mentioned, conveyed the impression that he had not been *de bonne foi* in his censures on him. Byron's words and feelings are so often opposed, and both so completely depend on the humour of the moment, that those who know him well could never attach much confidence to the stability of his sentiments, or the force of his expressions ; nor could they feel surprised, or angry, at hearing that he had spoken unkindly of some for whom he really felt friendship. This habit of censuring is his ruling passion, and he is now too old to correct it.

"I have been amused," said Byron, "in reading 'Les Essais de Montaigne,' to find how severe he is on the sentiment of *tristesse:* we are always severe on that particular passion to which we

are not addicted, and the French are exempt from this. Montaigne says that the Italians were right in translating their word *tristezza*, which means *tristesse*, into *malignité;* and this," continued Byron, "explains my *méchanceté*, for that I am subject to *tristesse* cannot be doubted; and if that means, as Le Sieur de Montaigne states, *la malignité*, this is the secret of all my evil doings, or evil imaginings, and probably is also the source of my inspiration." This idea appeared to amuse him very much, and he dwelt on it with apparent satisfaction, saying that it absolved him from a load of responsibility, as he considered himself, according to this, as no more accountable for the satires he might write or speak, than for his personal deformity. Nature, he said, had to answer for *malignité* as well as for deformity; she gave both, and the unfortunate persons on whom she bestowed them were not to be blamed for their effects.

Byron said that Montaigne was one of the French writers that amused him the most, as, independently of the quaintness with which he made his observations, a perusal of his works was like a repetition at school, they rubbed up the reader's classical knowledge. He added, that Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" was also excellent, from the quantity of desultory informa-

tion it contained, and was a mine of knowledge that, though much worked, was inexhaustible. I told him that he seemed to think more highly of Montaigne than did some of his own countrymen; for that when the Cardinal du Perron "*appelloit les Essais de Montaigne le bréviaire des honnêtes gens; le célèbre Huet, évêque d'Avranche, les disoit celui des honnêtes paresseux et des ignorans, qui veulent s'enfariner de quelque teinture des lettres*"—Byron said that the critique was severe, but just; for Montaigne was the greatest plagiarist that ever existed, and certainly had turned his reading to the most account.

"But," said Byron, "who is the author that is not, intentionally or unintentionally, a plagiarist? Many more, I am persuaded, are the latter than the former; for if one has read much, it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid adopting, not only the thoughts, but the expressions of others, which, after they have been some time stored in our minds, appear to us to come forth ready formed, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, and we fancy them our own progeny, instead of being those of adoption. I met lately a passage in a French book," continued Byron, "that states, *à propos* of plagiaries, that it was from the preface to the works of Montaigne, by Mademoiselle de Gournay, his adopted daughter, that Pascal stole his image of the Divinity:—'*C'est un cercle, dont*

*la circonférence est par-tout, et le centre nulle part.'** So you see that even the saintly Pascal could steal as well as another, and was probably unconscious of the theft.

"To be perfectly original," continued Byron, "one should think much and read little; and this is impossible, as one must have read much before one learns to think; for I have no faith in innate ideas, whatever I may have in innate predispositions. But after one has laid in a tolerable stock of materials for thinking, I should think the best plan would be to give the mind time to digest it, and then turn it all well over by thought and reflection, by which we make the knowledge acquired our own; and on this foundation we may let our originality (if we have any) build a superstructure, and if not, it supplies our want of it, to a certain degree. I am accused of plagiarism," continued Byron, "as I see by the newspapers. If I am guilty, I have many partners in the crime; for I assure you I scarcely know a living author who might not have a similar charge brought against him, and whose thoughts I have not occasionally found in the works of others; so that this consoles me.

"The book you lent me, Dr. Richardson's

* The actual words of Pascal are: "*Dieu est une sphère infinie d'ont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part.*"

'Travels along the Mediterranean,'"* said Byron, "is an excellent work. It abounds in information, sensibly and unaffectedly conveyed, and even without Lord Blessington's praises of the author, would have led me to conclude that he was an enlightened, sensible, and thoroughly good man. He is always in earnest," continued Byron, "and never writes for effect: his language is well chosen and correct; and his religious views unaffected and sincere without bigotry. He is just the sort of man I should like to have with me for Greece—clever, both as a man and a physician; for I require both—one for my mind, and the other for my body, which is a little the worse for wear, from the bad usage of the troublesome tenant that has inhabited it, God help me!

"It is strange," said Byron, "how seldom one

* Dr. Robert Richardson's "Travels" during the years 1816 to 1818 extended as far as the Second Cataract of the Nile, and embraced Jerusalem, Damascus, and Baalbec. He journeyed as physician with the Earl of Belmore. His work in two volumes was published in 1822, and reviewed in the October number of *The Quarterly* for that year. The reviewer expresses himself about the book in different terms from Byron: "As a writer of travels, he is neither so entertaining nor so instructive as might be wished, mistaking frequently cant and vulgar phrases for wit, and uncouth words for learning. That he has told the truth we cannot for a moment doubt; but that he has told it, as he says, 'in as few words, and in as agreeable a manner as possible,' we can by no means concede to him."

meets with clever, sensible men in the professions of divinity or physic! and yet they are precisely the professions that most peculiarly demand intelligence and ability,—as to keep the soul and body in good health requires no ordinary talents. I have, I confess, as little faith in medicine as Napoleon had. I think it has many remedies, but few specifics. I do not know if we arrived at the same conclusion by the same road. Mine has been drawn from observing that the medical men who fell in my way were, in general, so deficient in ability, that even had the science of medicine been fifty times more simplified than it ever will be in our time, they had not intelligence enough to comprehend or reduce it to practice, which has given me a much greater dread of remedies than diseases.

"Medical men do not sufficiently attend to idiosyncrasy," continued Byron, "on which so much depends, and often hurry to the grave one patient by a treatment that has succeeded with another. The moment they ascertain a disease to be the same as one they have known, they conclude the same remedies that cured the first must remove the second, not making allowance for the peculiarities of temperament, habits, and disposition; which last has a great influence in maladies. All that I have seen of physicians has given me a dread of them, which dread will continue until

I have met a doctor like your friend Richardson, who proves himself to be a sensible and intelligent man. I maintain," continued Byron, "that more than half our maladies are produced by accustoming ourselves to more sustenance than is required for the support of nature. We put too much oil into the lamp, and it blazes and burns out; but if we only put enough to feed the flame, it burns brightly and steadily. We have, God knows, sufficient alloy in our compositions, without reducing them still nearer to the brute by overfeeding. I think that one of the reasons why women are in general so much better than men, —for I do think they are, whatever I may say to the contrary," continued Byron, "is, that they do not indulge in *gourmandise* as men do; and, consequently, do not labour under the complicated horrors that indigestion produces, which has such a dreadful effect on the temper, as I have both witnessed and felt.

"There is nothing I so much dread as flattery," said Byron; "not that I mean to say I dislike it, —for, on the contrary, if well administered, it is very agreeable,—but I dread it because I know, from experience, we end by disliking those we flatter: it is the mode we take to avenge ourselves for stooping to the humiliation of flattering them. On this account, I never flatter those I really like; and, also, I should be fearful and

jealous of owing their regard for me to the pleasure my flattery gave them. I am not so forbearing with those I am indifferent about; for seeing how much people like flattery, I cannot resist giving them some, and it amuses me to see how they swallow even the largest doses. Now, there is ——— and ———; who could live on passable terms with them, that did not administer to their vanity? One tells you all his *bonnes fortunes*, and would never forgive you if you appeared to be surprised at their extent; and the other talks to you of prime ministers and dukes by their surnames, and cannot state the most simple fact or occurrence without telling you that Wellington or Devonshire told him so. One does not," continued Byron, "meet this last *faiblesse* out of England, and not then, I must admit, except among *parvenus*.

"It is doubtful which, vanity or conceit, is the most offensive," said Byron; "but I think conceit is, because the gratification of vanity depends on the suffrages of others, to gain which vain people must endeavour to please; but as conceit is content with its own approbation, it makes no sacrifice, and is not susceptible of humiliation. I confess that I have a spiteful pleasure," continued Byron, "in mortifying conceited people; and the gratification is enhanced by the difficulty of the task.

"One of the reasons why I dislike society is, that its contact excites all the evil qualities of my nature, which, like the fire in the flint, can only be elicited by friction. My philosophy is more theoretical than practical: it is never at hand when I want it; and the puerile passions that I witness in those whom I encounter excite disgust when examined near, though, viewed at a distance, they only create pity:—that is to say, in simple homely truth," continued Byron, "the follies of mankind, when they touch *me* not, I can be lenient to, and moralize on; but if they rub against my own, there is an end to the philosopher. We are all better in solitude, and more especially if we are tainted with evil passions, which, God help us! we all are, more or less," said Byron. "They are not then brought into action: reason and reflection have time and opportunity to resume that influence over us which they rarely can do if we are actors in the busy scene of life; and we grow better, because we believe ourselves better. Our passions often only sleep when we suppose them dead; and we are not convinced of our mistake till they awake with renewed strength, gained by repose. We are, therefore, wise when we choose solitude, where 'passions sleep and reason wakes;' for if we cannot conquer the evil qualities that adhere to our nature, we do well to encourage their

slumber. Like cases of acute pain, when the physician cannot remove the malady he administers soporifics.

"When I recommend solitude," said Byron, "I do not mean the solitude of country neighbourhood, where people pass their time *à dire, redire, et médire*. No! I mean a regular retirement, with a woman that one loves, and interrupted only by a correspondence with a man that one esteems, though if we put plural of man, it would be more agreeable for the correspondence. By this means, friendships would not be subject to the variations and estrangements that are so often caused by a frequent personal intercourse; and we might delude ourselves into a belief that they were sincere, and might be lasting—two difficult articles of faith in my creed of friendship. Socrates and Plato," continued Byron, "ridiculed Laches, who defined fortitude to consist in remaining firm in the ranks opposed to the enemy; and I agree with those philosophers in thinking that a retreat is not inglorious, whether from the enemy in the field or in the town, if one feels one's own weakness, and anticipates a defeat. I feel that society is my enemy, in even more than a figurative sense: I have not fled, but retreated from it; and if solitude has not made me better, I am sure it has prevented my becoming worse, which is a point gained.

"Have you ever observed," said Byron, "the extreme dread that *parvenus* have of aught that approaches to vulgarity? In manners, letters, conversation, nay, even in literature, they are always superfine; and a man of birth would unconsciously hazard a thousand dubious phrases sooner than a *parvenu* would risk the possibility of being suspected of one. One of the many advantages of birth is, that it saves one from this hypercritical gentility, and he of noble blood may be natural without the fear of being accused of vulgarity.

"I have left an assembly filled with all the names of *haut ton* in London, and where little but names were to be found, to seek relief from the ennui that overpowered me, in a—cider cellar:—are you not shocked?—and have found there more food for speculation than in the vapid circles of glittering dulness I had left. —— or —— dared not have done this; but I had the patent of nobility to carry me through it, and what would have been deemed originality and spirit in me, would have been considered a natural bias to vulgar habits in them. In my works, too, I have dared to pass the frozen mole-hills—I cannot call them Alps, though they are frozen eminences—of high life, and have used common thoughts and common words to express my impressions; where poor —— would have

clarified each thought, and double-refined each sentence, until he had reduced them to the polished and cold temperature of the illuminated houses of ice that he loves to frequent; which have always reminded me of the palace of ice built to please an empress, cold, glittering, and costly. But I suppose that —— and —— like them, from the same cause that I like high life below stairs, not being born to it:—there is a good deal in this. I have been abused for dining at Tom Cribb's,* where I certainly was amused, and have returned from a dinner where the guests were composed of the magnates of the land, where I had nigh gone to sleep—at least my intellect slumbered—so dullified was I and those around me, by the soporific quality of the conversation, if conversation it might be called.

"For a long time I thought it was my constitutional melancholy that made me think London

* Tom Cribb, born July 8th, 1781, died May 11th, 1848, was the champion pugilist of his day. In 1811 he retired from the business of boxing and became a coal merchant, and failing in that business he became a publican. He taught boxing, and Byron was one of his pupils. When the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia visited London in 1814, he was called upon to exhibit before them his skill in the art of sparring. At the coronation of George IV. he was one of the prize-fighters, dressed as pages, who guarded the entrance to Westminster Hall. He was buried in Woolwich Churchyard, and sympathizing friends erected a monument to his memory there, on which a lion is represented grieving over the ashes of a hero.

society so insufferably tiresome; but I discovered that those who had no such malady found it equally so; the only difference was that they yawned under the nightly inflictions, yet still continued to bear them, while I writhed, and 'muttered curses not loud but deep' against the well-dressed automatons that threw a spell over my faculties, making me doubt if I could any longer feel or think; and I have sought the solitude of my chamber, almost doubting my own identity, or, at least, my sanity; such was the overpowering effect produced on me by exclusive society in London. Madame de Staël was the only person of talent I ever knew who was not overcome by it; but this was owing to the constant state of excitement she was kept in by her extraordinary self-complacency, and the mystifications of the dandies, who made her believe all sorts of things. I have seen her entranced by them, listening with undisguised delight to exaggerated compliments, uttered only to hoax her, by persons incapable of appreciating her genius, and who doubted its existence from the facility with which she received mystifications which would have been detected in a moment by the most common-place woman in the room. It is thus genius and talent are judged of," continued Byron, "by those who, having neither, are incapable of understanding them; and a punster

may glory in puzzling a genius of the first order, by a play on words that was below his comprehension, though *suited* to that of the most ordinary understandings.

"Madame de Staël had no tact; she would believe anything, merely because she did not take the trouble to examine, being too much occupied with self, and often said the most *mal à propos* things, because she was thinking not of the person she addressed, but of herself. She had a party to dine with her one day in London, when Sir James and Lady [Mackintosh ?] entered the drawing-room, the lady dressed in a green gown, with a shawl of the same verdant hue, and a bright red turban. Madame de Staël marched up to her in her eager manner, and exclaimed, '*Ah, mon Dieu, miladi! comme vous ressemblez à un perroquet!*' The poor lady looked confounded: the company tried, but in vain, to suppress the smiles the observation excited; but all felt that the making it betrayed a total want of tact in the 'Corinne.'

"Does the cant of sentiment still continue in England?" asked Byron. "'Childe Harold' called it forth; but my 'Juan' was well calculated to cast it into shade, and had that merit, if it had no other; but I must not refer to the Don, as that, I remember, is a prohibited subject between us. Nothing sickens me so completely," said

Byron, "as women who affect sentiment in conversation. A woman without sentiment is not a woman; but I have observed, that those who most display it in words have least of the reality. Sentiment, like love and grief, should be reserved for privacy; and when I hear women *affichant* their sentimentality, I look upon it as an allegorical mode of declaring their wish of finding an object on whom they could bestow its superfluity.

"I am of a jealous nature," said Byron, "and should wish to call slumbering sentiment into life in the woman I love, instead of finding that I was chosen, from its excess and activity rendering a partner in the firm indispensable. I should hate a woman," continued Byron, "who could laugh at or ridicule sentiment, as I should, and do, women who have not religious feelings: and, much as I dislike bigotry, I think it a thousand times more pardonable in a woman than irreligion. There is something unfeminine in the want of religion, that takes off the peculiar charm of woman. It inculcates mildness, forbearance, and charity,—those graces that adorn them more than all others," continued Byron, "and whose beneficent effects are felt, not only on their minds and manners, but are visible in their countenances, to which they give their own sweet character. But when I say that I admire

religion in women," said Byron, "don't fancy that I like sectarian ladies, distributors of tracts, armed and ready for controversies, many of whom only preach religion, but do not practise it. No; I like to know that it is the guide of woman's actions, the softener of her words, the soother of her cares, and those of all dear to her, who are comforted by her,—that it is, in short, the animating principle to which all else is referred.

"When I see women professing religion and violating its duties,—mothers turning from erring daughters, instead of staying to reclaim,—sisters deserting sisters, whom, in their hearts, they know to be more pure than themselves,—and wives abandoning husbands on the ground of faults that they should have wept over, and redeemed by the force of love,—then it is," continued Byron, "that I exclaim against the cant of false religion, and laugh at the credulity of those who can reconcile such conduct with the dictates of a creed that ordains forgiveness, and commands that 'if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted;' and that tells a wife, that 'if she hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife,' etc.

"Now, people professing religion either believe, or do not believe, such creeds," continued Byron. "If they believe, and act contrary to their belief, what avails their religion, except to throw discredit on its followers, by showing that they practise not its tenets? and if they inwardly disbelieve, as their conduct would lead one to think, are they not guilty of hypocrisy? It is such incongruities between the professions and conduct of those who affect to be religious that puts me out of patience," continued Byron, "and makes me wage war with cant, and not, as many suppose, a disbelief or want of faith in religion. I want to see it *practised*, and to know, which is soon made known by the conduct, that it dwells in the heart, instead of being on the lips only of its votaries. Let me not be told that the mothers, sisters, and wives, who violate the duties such relationships impose, are good and religious people: let it be admitted that a mother, sister, or wife, who deserts instead of trying to lead back the stray sheep to the flock, cannot be truly religious, and I shall exclaim no more against hypocrisy and cant, because they will no longer be dangerous. Poor Mrs. Sheppard tried more, and did more, to reclaim me," continued Byron, "than——: but no; as I have been preaching religion, I shall practise one of its tenets, and be charitable; so I shall not finish the sentence."

It appears to me that Byron has reflected much on religion, and that many, if not all, the doubts and sarcasms he has expressed on it are to be attributed only to his enmity against its false worshippers. He is indignant at seeing people professing it governed wholly by worldly principles in their conduct; and fancies that he is serving the true cause by exposing the votaries that he thinks dishonour it. He forgets that in so exposing and decrying them, he is breaking through the commandments of charity he admires, and says ought to govern our actions towards our erring brethren; but that he reflects deeply on the subject of religion and its duties, is, I hope, a step gained in the right path, in which I trust he will continue to advance: and which step I attribute, as does he, to the effect the prayer of Mrs. Sheppard had on his mind, and which, it is evident, has made a lasting impression, by the frequency and seriousness with which he refers to it.

"There are two blessings of which people never know the value until they have lost them," said Byron, "health and reputation. And not only is their loss destructive to our own happiness, but injurious to the peace and comfort of our friends. Health seldom goes without temper accompanying it; and, that fled, we become a burden on the patience of those around us, until

dislike replaces pity and forbearance. Loss of reputation entails still greater evils. In losing caste, deservedly or otherwise," continued Byron, "we become reckless and misanthropic: we cannot sympathize with those from whom we are separated by the barrier of public opinion, and pride becomes 'the scorpion, girt by fire,' that turns on our own breasts the sting prepared for our enemies. Shakespeare says, that 'it is a bitter thing to look into happiness through another man's eyes;' and this must he do," said Byron, "who has lost his reputation. Nay, rendered nervously sensitive by the falseness of his position, he sees, or fancies he sees, scorn or avoidance in the eyes of all he encounters; and, as it is well known that we are never so jealous of the respect of others as when we have forfeited our own, every mark of coldness or disrespect he meets with arouses a host of angry feelings, that prey upon his peace.

"Such a man is to be feared," continued Byron; "and yet how many such have the world made! how many errors have not slander and calumny magnified into crimes of the darkest dye! and, malevolence and injustice having set the condemned seal on the reputation of him who has been judged without a trial, he is driven without the pale of society, a sense of injustice rankling in his heart; and if his hand be not

against each man, the hand, or at least the tongue, of each man is against him. The genius and powers of such a man," continued Byron, "act but as fresh incitements to the unsated malice of his calumniators; and the fame they win is but as the flame that consumes the funeral pile, whose blaze attracts attention to the substance that feeds it. Mediocrity is to be desired for those who lose caste, because, if it gains not pardon for errors, it sinks them into oblivion. But genius," continued Byron, "reminds the enemies of its possessor, of his existence, and of their injustice. They are enraged that he on whom they heaped obloquy can surmount it, and elevate himself on new ground, where their malice cannot obstruct his path."

It was impossible not to see that his own position had led Byron to these reflections; and on observing the changes in his expressive countenance while uttering them, who could resist pitying the morbid feelings which had given them birth? The milk and honey that flowed in his breast has been turned to gall by the bitterness with which his errors have been assailed; but even now, so much of human kindness remains in his nature, that I am persuaded the effusions of wounded pride which embody themselves in the biting satires that escape from him, are more productive of pain to him who writes, than to those

on whom they are written. Knowing Byron as I do, I could forgive the most cutting satire his pen ever traced, because I know the bitter feelings and violent reaction which led to it; and that, in thus avenging some real or imagined injury on individuals, he looks on them as a part of that great whole, of which that world which he has waged war with, and that he fancies has waged war with him, is composed.

He looks on himself like a soldier in action, who, without any individual resentment, strikes at all within his reach, as component parts of the force to which he is opposed. If this be indefensible, and all must admit that it is so, let us be merciful even while we are condemning; and let us remember what must have been the heart-aches and corroding thoughts of a mind so sensitive as Byron's, ere the last weapons of despair were resorted to, and the fearful sally, the forlorn hope attack, on the world's opinions made, while many of those opinions had partisans within his own breast, even while he stood in the last breach of defeated hope to oppose them.

The poison in which he has dipped the arrows aimed at the world has long been preying on his own life, and has been produced by the deleterious draughts administered by that world, and which he has quaffed to the dregs, until it has turned the once healthful current of his existence

into deadly venom, poisoning all the fine and generous qualities that adorned his nature. He feels what he might have been, and what he is, and detests the world that has marred his destiny. But, as the passions lose their empire, he will think differently: the veil which now obscures his reason will pass away, like clouds dispelled by the sun; he will learn to distinguish much of good, where he has hitherto seen only evil; and no longer braving the world, and, to enrage it, assuming faults he has not, he will let the good qualities he has make themselves known, and gain that good-will and regard they were formed to conciliate.

"I often, in imagination, pass over a long lapse of years," said Byron, "and console myself for present privations, in anticipating the time when my daughter will know me by reading my works;* for, though the hand of prejudice may

* Sixteen months before her death, Ada Lady Lovelace paid a visit to the home of her ancestors, and in the great library Colonel Wildman, the then proprietor of Newstead Abbey, quoted a passage from Byron's works to Byron's daughter, and she, touched by the beauty of the words, inquired the name of the author. For reply, Colonel Wildman pointed to the painting of her father, which hung on the library wall. It came as a revelation to her. She confessed that she was brought up in complete ignorance of all that regarded her father. From that time Lady Lovelace devoted herself to a close study of her father's life and works. The loss of the affection of that noble heart, which had so long been kept from her, preyed upon her mind: she fell ill—so ill that she knew

conceal my porrait ftrom her eyes, it cannot hereafter conceal my thoughts and feelings, which will talk to her when *he* to whom they belonged has ceased to exist. The triumph will then be mine; and the tears that my child will shed over expressions wrung from me by mental agony,—the certainty that she will enter into the sentiments which dictated the various allusions to her and myself in my works,—consoles me in many a gloomy hour. Ada's mother has feasted on the smiles of her infancy and growth, but the tears of her maturity shall be mine."

I thought it a good opportunity to represent to Byron, that this thought alone should operate to prevent his ever writing a page which could bring the blush of offended modesty to the cheek of his daughter; and that, if he hoped to live in her heart, unsullied by aught that could abate her admiration, he ought never more to write a line of "Don Juan." He remained silent for some

she could never hope to recover. In this last illness she wrote Colonel Wildman a letter begging to be buried beside her father. "Yes, I will be buried there: not where my mother can join me, but by the side of him who so loved me, and whom I was not taught to love; and this reunion of our bodies in the grave shall be an emblem of the union of our spirits in the bosom of the eternal."—V. R. R.

Lord Byron was buried in the church of Hucknall Torkard, Notts, in which may be seen a monument to him, erected by his sister, Mrs. Leigh.

minutes, and then said, "You are right; I never recollected this. I am jealously tenacious of the undivided sympathy of my daughter; and that work, ('Don Juan,') written to beguile hours of *tristesse* and wretchedness, is well calculated to loosen my hold on her affection. I will write no more of it;—would that I had never written a line!"

There is something tender and beautiful in the deep love with which poor Byron turns to his daughter. This is his last resting-place, and on her heart has he cast his last anchor of hope. When one reflects that he looks not to consolation from her during his life, as he believes her mother implacable, and only hopes that, when the grave has closed over him, his child will cherish his memory, and weep over his misfortunes, it is impossible not to sympathize with his feelings. Poor Byron! why is he not always true to himself? Who can, like him, excite sympathy, even when one knows him to be erring? But he shames one out of one's natural and better feelings by his mockery of self. Alas!

> "His is a lofty spirit, turn'd aside
> From its bright path by woes, and wrongs, and pride;
> And onward in its new, tumultuous course,
> Borne with too rapid and intense a force
> To pause one moment in the dread career,
> And ask—if such could be its native sphere?"

How unsatisfactory is it to find one's feelings with regard to Byron varying every day! This is because he is never two days the same. The day after he has awakened the deepest interest, his manner of scoffing at himself and others destroys it, and one feels as if one had been duped into a sympathy, only to be laughed at.

"I have been accused (said Byron) of thinking ill of women. This has proceeded from my sarcastic observations on them in conversation, much more than from what I have written. The fact is, I always say whatever comes into my head, and very often say things to provoke people to whom I am talking. If I meet a romantic person, with what I call a too exalted opinion of women, I have a peculiar satisfaction in speaking lightly of them; not out of pique to your sex, but to mortify their champion; as I always conclude, that when a man over-praises women, he does it to convey the impression of how much they must have favoured him, to have won such gratitude towards them; whereas there is such an abnegation of vanity in a poor devil's decrying women,—it is such a proof positive that they never distinguished him, that I can overlook it.

"People take for gospel all I say, and go away continually with false impressions. *Mais n'importe!* it will render the statements of my

future biographers more amusing; as I flatter myself I shall have more than one. Indeed, the more the merrier, say I. One will represent me as a sort of sublime misanthrope, with moments of kind feeling. This, *par exemple*, is my favourite *rôle*. Another will portray me as a modern Don Juan; and a third (as it would be hard if a votary of the Muses had less than the number of the Graces for his biographers) will, it is to be hoped, if only for opposition sake, represent me as an *amiable*, ill-used gentleman, 'more sinned against than sinning.' Now, if I know myself, I should say, that I have no character at all. By the bye, this is what has long been said, as I lost mine, as an Irishman would say, before I had it; that is to say, my reputation was gone, according to the good-natured English, before I had arrived at years of discretion, which is the period one is supposed to have found one. But, joking apart, what I think of myself is, that I am so changeable, being everything by turns and nothing long,—I am such a strange *mélange* of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me. There are but two sentiments to which I am constant,—a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant, and neither is calculated to gain me friends. I am of a wayward, uncertain disposition, more disposed to display the defects than the redeeming points in my nature;

this, at least, proves that I understand mankind, for they are always ready to believe the evil, but not the good; and there is no crime of which I could accuse myself, for which they would not give me implicit credit. What do you think of me?" (asked he, looking seriously in my face.)

I replied, "I look on you as a spoilt child of genius, an epicycle in your own circle." At which he laughed, though half disposed to be angry.

"I have made as many sacrifices to liberty (continued Byron) as most people of my age; and the one I am about to undertake is not the least, though, probably, it will be the last; for, with my broken health, and the chances of war, Greece will most likely terminate my mortal career. I like Italy, its climate, its customs, and, above all, its freedom from cant of every kind, which is the *primum mobile* of England: therefore it is no slight sacrifice of comfort to give up the tranquil life I lead here, and break through the ties I have formed, to engage in a cause, for the successful result of which I have no very sanguine hopes.

"You will think me more superstitious than ever (said Byron) when I tell you, that I have a presentiment that I shall die in Greece. I hope it may be in action, for that would be a good finish to a very *triste* existence, and I have

a horror of death-bed scenes; but as I have not been famous for my luck in life, most probably I shall not have more in the manner of my death, and I may draw my last sigh, not on the field of glory, but on the bed of disease. I very nearly died when I was in Greece in my youth; perhaps, as things have turned out, it would have been well if I had; I should have lost nothing, and the world very little, and I would have escaped many cares, for God knows I have had enough of one kind or another: but I am getting gloomy, and looking either back or forward is not calculated to enliven me. One of the reasons why I quiz my friends in conversation is, that it keeps me from thinking of myself: you laugh, but it is true."

Byron had so unquenchable a thirst for celebrity, that no means were left untried that might attain it: this frequently led to his expressing opinions totally at variance with his actions and real sentiments, and *vice versâ*, and made him appear quite inconsistent and puerile. There was no sort of celebrity that he did not, at some period or other, condescend to seek, and he was not over-nice in the means, provided he obtained the end. This weakness it was that led him to accord his society to many persons whom he thought unworthy the distinction, fancying that he might find a greater facility in astonishing

them, which he had a childish propensity to do, than with those who were more on an equality with him. When I say persons that he thought unworthy of his society, I refer only to their stations in life, and not to their merits, as the first was the criterion by which Byron was most prone to judge them, never being able to conquer the overweening prejudices in favour of aristocracy that subjugated him.

He expected a deferential submission to his opinions from those whom he thought he honoured by admitting to his society; and if they did not seem duly impressed with a sense of his condescension, as well as astonished at the versatility of his powers and accomplishments, he showed his dissatisfaction by assuming an air of superiority, and by opposing their opinions in a dictatorial tone, as if from his fiat there was no appeal. If, on the contrary, they appeared willing to admit his superiority in all respects, he was kind, playful, and good-humoured, and only showed his own sense of it by familiar jokes, and attempts at hoaxing, to which he was greatly addicted.

An extraordinary peculiarity in Byron was his constant habit of disclaiming friendships, a habit that must have been rather humiliating to those who prided themselves on being considered his friends. He invariably, in conversing about the

persons supposed to stand in that relation to him, drew a line of demarcation; and Lord Clare,* with Mr. Hobhouse and Moore, were the only persons he allowed to be within its pale. Long acquaintance, habitual correspondence, and reciprocity of kind actions, which are the general bonds of friendship, were not admitted by Byron to be sufficient claims to the title of friend; and he seized with avidity every opportunity of denying this relation with persons for whom, I am persuaded, he felt the sentiment, and to whom he would not have hesitated to have given all proof but the *name*, yet who, wanting this, could not consistently with delicacy receive aught else.

This habit of disclaiming friendships was very injudicious in Byron, as it must have wounded the *amour-propre* of those who liked him, and humiliated the pride and delicacy of all whom he

* John Fitzgibbon, second Earl of Clare, was born June 2nd, 1792. He was with Byron at Harrow, and is depicted in his earlier poems under the name of Lycus. In the poem entitled "Childish Recollections," Byron writes:

> "Lycus! on me thy claims are justly great:
> Thy milder virtues could my muse relate,
> To thee alone, unrivalled, would belong
> The feeb'e efforts of my lengthened song.
> Well canst thou boast, to lead in senates fit,
> A Spartan firmness with Athenian wit:
> Though yet in embryo these perfections shine,
> Lycus, thy father's fame will soon be thine."

had ever laid under obligations, as well as freed from a sense of what was due to friendship, those who, restrained by the acknowledgment of that tie, might have proved themselves his zealous defenders and advocates. It was his aristocratic pride that prompted this ungracious conduct, and I remember telling him, *à propos* to his denying friendships, that all the persons with whom he disclaimed them, must have less vanity, and more kindness of nature, than fall to the lot of most people, if they did not renounce the sentiment, which he disdained to acknowledge, and give him proofs that it no longer operated on them.

His own morbid sensitiveness did not incline him to be more merciful to that of others; it seemed, on the contrary, to render him less so, as if every feeling was concentrated in self alone, and yet this egoist was capable of acts of generosity, kindness, and pity for the unfortunate: but he appeared to think, that the physical ills of others were those alone which he was called on to sympathize with; their moral ailments he entered not into, as he considered his own to be too elevated to admit of any reciprocity with those of others.

The immeasurable difference between his genius and that of all others he encountered had given him a false estimate of their feelings and characters; they could not, like him, embody

their feelings in language that found an echo in every breast, and hence he concluded they had neither the depth nor refinement of his. He forgot that this very power of sending forth his thoughts disburdened him of much of their bitterness, while others, wanting it, felt but the more poignantly what is unshared and unexpressed.

I have told Byron that he added ingratitude to his other faults, by scoffing at and despising his countrymen, who have shared all his griefs, and enjoyed all his biting pleasantries; he has sounded the diapason of his own feelings, and found the concord in theirs, which proves a sympathy he cannot deny, and ought not to mock: he says, that he values not their applause or sympathy; that he who describes passions and crimes, touches chords which vibrate in every breast, not that either pity or interest is felt for him who submits to this moral anatomy; but that each discovers the symptoms of his own malady and feels and thinks only of self, while analyzing the griefs or pleasures of another.

When Byron had been one day repeating to me some epigrams and lampoons, in which many of his friends were treated with great severity, I observed that, in case he died, and that these *proofs of friendship* came before the public, what would be the feelings of those so severely dealt

by, and who previously had indulged the agreeable illusion of being high in his good graces!

"That (said Byron) is precisely one of the ideas which most amuses me. I often fancy the rage and humiliation of my quondam friends at hearing the truth (at least from me) for the first time, and when I am beyond the reach of their malice. Each individual will enjoy the sarcasms against his friends, but that will not console him for those against himself. Knowing the affectionate dispositions of my *soi-disant* friends, and the mortal chagrin my death would occasion them, I have written my thoughts of each, purely as a consolation for them in case they survive me. Surely this is philanthropic, for a more effectual means of destroying all regret for the dead could hardly be found than discovering, after their decease, memorials in which the surviving friends were treated with more sincerity than flattery.

"What grief (continued Byron, laughing while he spoke) could resist the charges of ugliness, dulness, or any of the thousand nameless defects, personal or mental, to which flesh is heir, coming from one *ostentatiously loved, lamented, and departed*, and when reprisals or recantations are impossible! Tears would soon be dried, lamentations and eulogiums changed to reproaches, and many

faults would be discovered in the dear departed that had previously escaped detection. If half the observations (said Byron) which friends make on each other were *written* down instead of being said, how few would remain on terms of friendship! People are in such daily habits of commenting on the defects of friends, that they are unconscious of the unkindness of it; which only comes home to their business and bosoms when they discover that *they* have been so treated, which proves that *self* is the only medium for feeling or judging of, or for, others. Now I *write down*, as well as speak, my sentiments of those who believe that they have gulled me; and I only wish (in case I die before them) that I could return to witness the effect my posthumous opinions of them are likely to produce on their minds. What good fun this would be!

"Is it not disinterested in me to lay up this source of consolation for my friends, whose grief for my loss might otherwise be too acute? You don't seem to value it as you ought (continued Byron, with one of his sardonic smiles, seeing that I looked, as I really felt, surprised at his avowed insincerity). I feel the same pleasure in anticipating the rage and mortification of my *soi-disant* friends, at the discovery of my real sentiments of them, that a miser may be supposed to feel while making a will that is to disappoint

all the expectants who have been toadying him for years. Then only think how amusing it will be, to compare my posthumous with my previously given opinions, one throwing ridicule on the other. This will be delicious, (said he, rubbing his hands,) and the very anticipation of it charms me. Now this, by your grave face, you are disposed to call very wicked, nay, more, very mean; but wicked or mean, or both united, it is human nature, or at least my nature."

Should various poems of Byron that I have seen ever meet the public eye, and this is by no means unlikely, they will furnish a better criterion for judging his real sentiments than all the notices of him that have yet appeared.

Each day that brought Byron nearer to the period fixed on for his departure for Greece seemed to render him still more reluctant to undertake it. He frequently expressed a wish to return to England, if only for a few weeks, before he embarked, and yet had not firmness of purpose sufficient to carry his wish into effect. There was a helplessness about Byron, a sort of abandonment of himself to his destiny, as he called it, that commonplace people can as little pity as understand. His purposes in visiting England, previous to Greece, were vague and undefined, even to himself; but from various observations that he let fall, I imagined that he hoped to

establish something like an amicable understanding, or correspondence, with Lady Byron, and to see his child, which last desire had become a fixed one in his mind. He so often turned with a yearning heart to his wish of going to England before Greece, that we asked him why, being a free agent, he did not go. The question seemed to embarrass him. He stammered, blushed, and said,—

"Why, true, there is no reason why I should not go; but yet I want resolution to encounter all the disagreeable circumstances which might, and most probably would, greet my arrival in England. The host of foes that now slumber, because they believe me out of their reach, and that their stings cannot touch me, would soon awake with renewed energies to assail and blacken me. The press, that powerful engine of a licentious age, (an engine known only in civilized England as an invader of the privacy of domestic life,) would pour forth all its venom against me, ridiculing my person, misinterpreting my motives, and misrepresenting my actions. I can mock at all these attacks when the sea divides me from them, but on the spot, and reading the effect of each libel in the alarmed faces of my selfishly-sensitive friends, whose common attentions, under such circumstances, seem to demand gratitude for the personal risk of abuse incurred by a contact

with the attacked delinquent,—No, this I could not stand, because I once endured it, and never have forgotten what I felt under the infliction.

"I wish to see Lady Byron and my child, because I firmly believe I shall never return from Greece, and I anxiously desire to forgive, and be forgiven, by the former, and to embrace Ada. It is more than probable (continued Byron) that the same amiable consistency,—to call it by no harsher name,—which has hitherto influenced Lady B.'s adherence to the line she had adopted, of refusing all explanation, or attempt at reconciliation, would still operate on her conduct. My letters would be returned unopened, my daughter would be prevented from seeing me, and any step I might, from affection, be forced to take to assert my right of seeing her once more before I left England, would be misrepresented as an act of the most barbarous tyranny and persecution towards the mother and the child; and I should be driven again from the British shore, more vilified, and with even greater ignominy, than on the separation.

"Such is my idea of the justice of public opinion in England, (continued Byron,) and, with such woeful experience as I have had, can you wonder that I dare not encounter the annoyances I have detailed? But if I live, and return from Greece with something better and higher than

the reputation or glory of a poet, opinions may change, as the successful are always judged favourably of in our country; my laurels may cover my faults better than the bays have done, and give a totally different reading to my thoughts, words, and deeds."

With such various powers of pleasing as rarely fall to the lot of man, Byron possessed the counterbalance to an extraordinary degree, as he could disenchant his admirers almost as quickly as he had won their admiration. He was too observant not to discover, at a glance, the falling off in the admiration of those around him, and resented as an injury the decrease in their esteem, which a little consideration for their feelings, and some restraint in the expression of his own, would have prevented. Sensitive, jealous, and exigent himself, he had no sympathy or forbearance for those weaknesses in others. He claimed admiration not only for his genius, but for his defects, as a sort of right that appertained solely to him. He was conscious of this *faiblesse*, but wanted either power or inclination to correct it, and was deeply offended if others appeared to have made the discovery.

There was a sort of mental reservation in Byron's intercourse with those with whom he was on habits of intimacy that he had not tact enough to conceal, and which was more offensive

when the natural flippancy of his manner was taken into consideration. His incontinence of speech on subjects of a personal nature, and with regard to the defects of friends, rendered this display of reserve on other points still more offensive; as, after having disclosed secrets which left him, and some of those whom he professed to like, at the mercy of the discretion of the person confided in, he would absolve him from the best motive for secrecy—that of implied confidence—by disclaiming any sentiment of friendship for those so trusted.

It was as though he said: I think aloud, and you hear my thoughts; but I have no feeling of friendship towards you, though you might imagine I have, from the confidence I repose. Do not deceive yourself; few, if any, are worthy of my friendship: and only one or two possess even a portion of it. I think not of you but as the first recipient for the disclosures that I have *le besoin* to make, and as an admirer whom I can make administer to my vanity, by exciting in turn surprise, wonder, and admiration; but I can have no sympathy with you.

Byron, in all his intercourse with acquaintances, proved that he wanted the simplicity and good faith of uncivilized life, without having acquired the tact and fine perception that throws a veil over the artificial coldness and selfishness of

refined civilization, which must be concealed to be rendered endurable. To keep alive sympathy, there must be a reciprocity of feelings; and this Byron did not, or would not, understand. It was the want of this, or rather the studied display of the want, that deprived him of the affection that would otherwise have been unreservedly accorded to him, and which he had so many qualities calculated to call forth.

Those who have known Byron only in the turmoil and feverish excitement of a London life, may not have had time or opportunity to be struck with this defect in his nature; or, if they observed it, might naturally attribute it to the artificial state of society in London, which more or less affects all its members; but when he was seen in the isolation of a foreign land, with few acquaintances, and fewer friends, to make demands either on his time or sympathy, this extreme egoism became strikingly visible, and repelled the affection that must otherwise have replaced the admiration to which he never failed to give birth.

Byron had thought long and profoundly on man and his vices,—natural and acquired;—he generalized and condemned *en masse*, in theory; while, in practice, he was ready to allow the exceptions to his general rule. He had commenced his travels ere yet age or experience had

rendered him capable of forming a just estimate of the civilized world he had left, or the uncivilized one he was exploring: hence he saw both through a false medium, and observed not that their advantages and disadvantages were counterbalanced. Byron wished for that Utopian state of perfection which experience teaches us it is impossible to attain,—the simplicity and good faith of savage life, with the refinement and intelligence of civilization.

Naturally of a melancholy temperament, his travels in Greece were eminently calculated to give a still more sombre tint to his mind, and tracing at each step the marks of degradation which had followed a state of civilization still more luxurious than that he had left; and surrounded with the fragments of arts that we can but imperfectly copy, and ruins whose original beauty we can never hope to emulate, he grew into a contempt of the actual state of things, and lived but in dreams of the past, or aspirations for the future. This state of mind, as unnatural as it is uncommon in a young man, destroyed the bonds of sympathy between him and those of his own age, without creating any with those of a more advanced.

With the young he could not sympathize, because they felt not like him; and with the old, because that, though their reasonings and

reflections arrived at the same conclusions, they had not journeyed by the same road. They had travelled by the beaten one of experience, but he had abridged the road, having been hurried over it by the passions which were still unexhausted, and ready to go in search of new discoveries. The wisdom thus prematurely acquired by Byron being the forced fruit of circumstances and travail acting on an excitable mind, instead of being the natural production ripened by time, was, like all precocious advantages, of comparatively little utility; it influenced his words more than his deeds, and wanted that patience and forbearance towards the transgressions of others that is best acquired by having suffered from and repented our own.

It would be a curious speculation to reflect how far the mind of Byron might have been differently operated on, had he, instead of going to Greece in his early youth, spent the same period beneath the genial climate, and surrounded by the luxuries of Italy. We should then, most probably, have had a "Don Juan" of a less reprehensible character, and more excusable from the youth of its author, followed, in natural succession, by atoning works produced by the autumnal sun of maturity, and the mellowing touches of experience, instead of his turning from the more elevated tone of "Childe Harold" to "Don Juan."

Each year, had life been spared him, would have corrected the false wisdom that had been the bane of Byron, and which, like the fruit so eloquently described by himself as growing on the banks of the Dead Sea, that was lovely to the eye, but turned to ashes when tasted, was productive only of disappointment to him, because he mistook it for the real fruit its appearance resembled, and found only bitterness in its taste.

There was that in Byron which would have yet nobly redeemed the errors of his youth, and the misuse of his genius, had length of years been granted him; and, while lamenting his premature death, our regret is rendered the more poignant by the reflection, that we are deprived of works which, tempered by an understanding arrived at its meridian, would have had all the genius, without the immorality of his more youthful productions, which, notwithstanding their defects, have formed an epoch in the literature of his country.

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ERRATA.

Page 51, *for* "*p ofess*" *read* "*profess.*"
Page 297, *for* "*du enfer*" *read* "*d'enfer.*"

THE END.

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